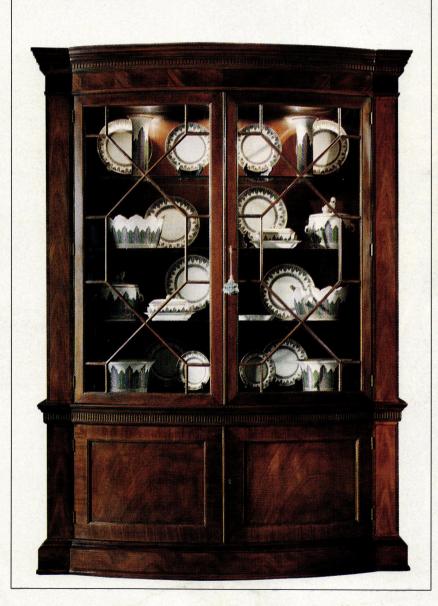




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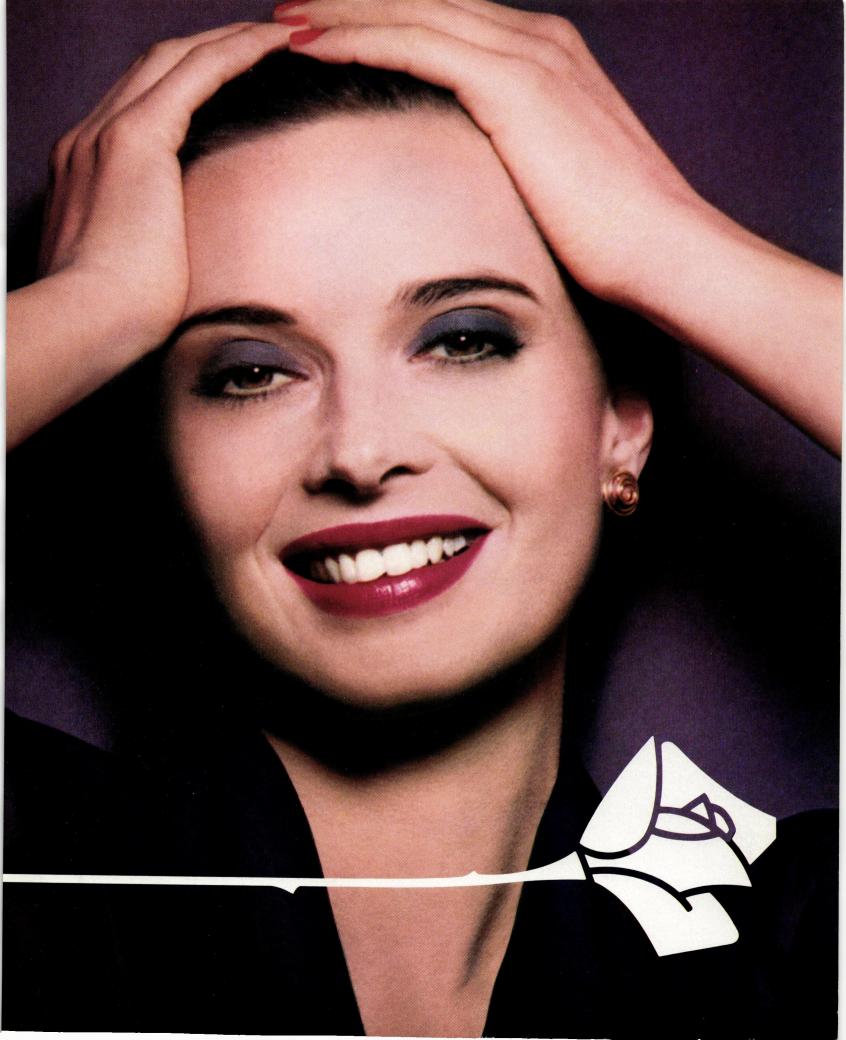
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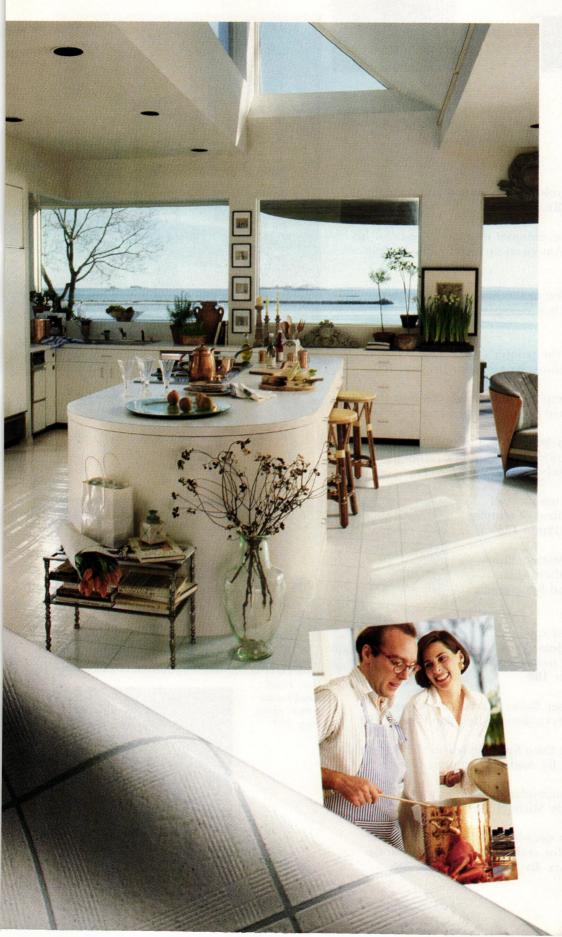
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HOUSE & GARDEN APRIL 1990

Volume 162, Number 4



COVER Two boys in an Alto Adige courtyard. Page 136. Photograph by Alexandre Bailhache.

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Dancer with Finger
on Chin. Page 176.

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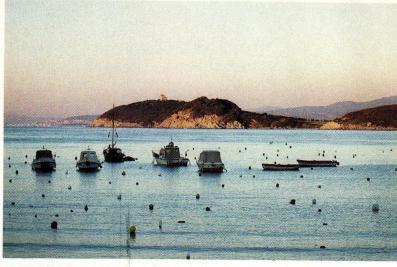
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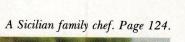
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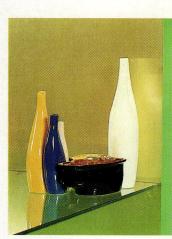
Boats moored off the secluded Maremma coast. Page 64.



Mario Bellini's Olivetti calculator. Page 102.



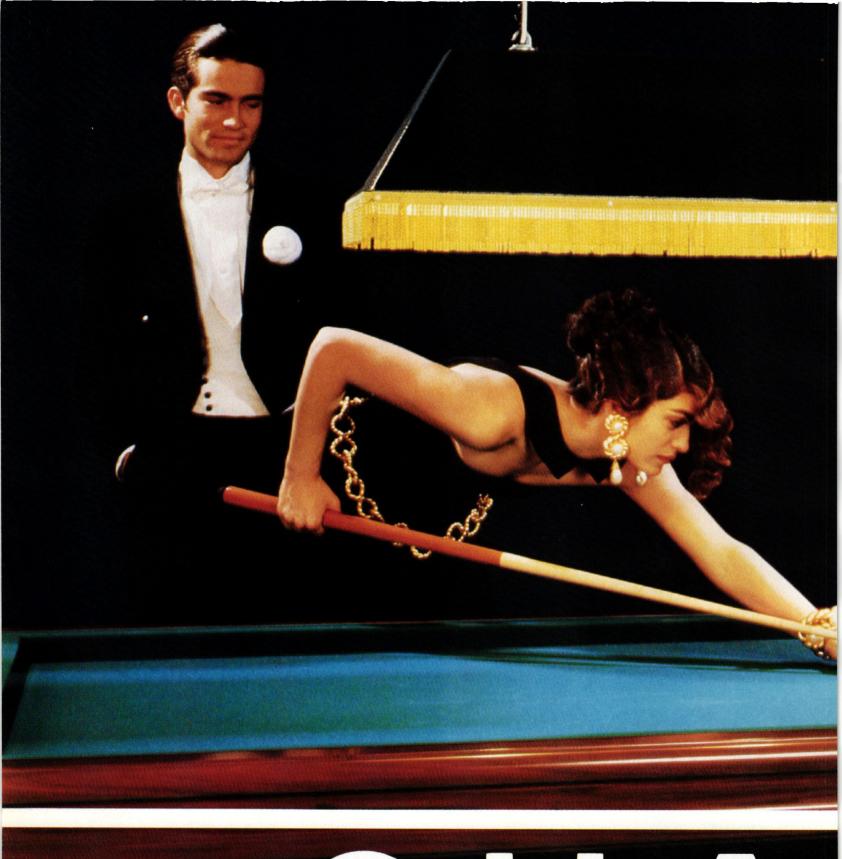
A still life from Milan's Museo Alchimia. Page 130.



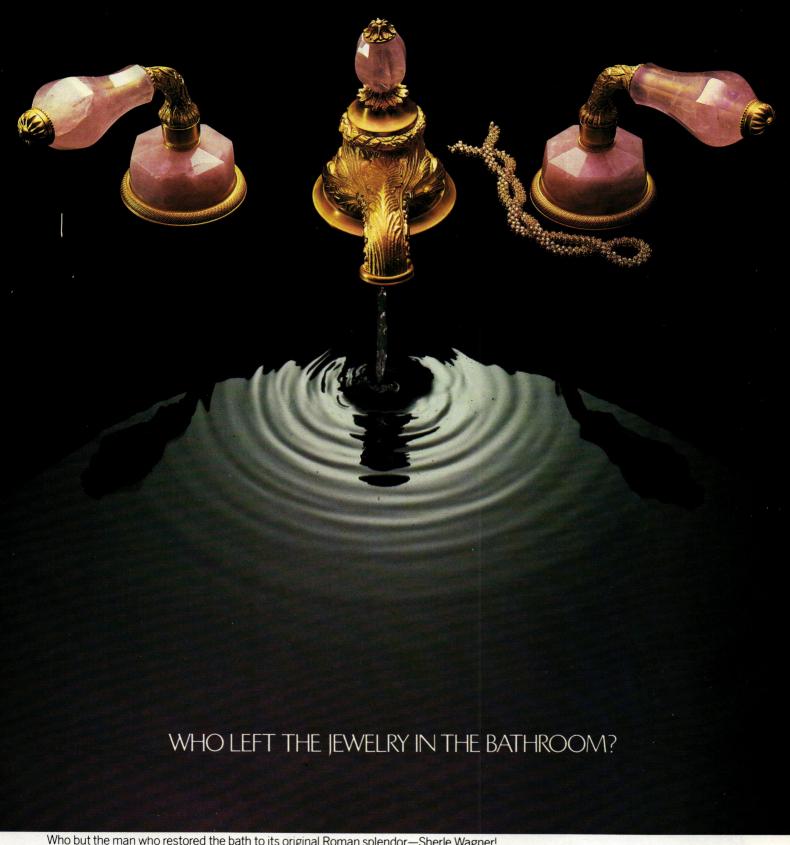


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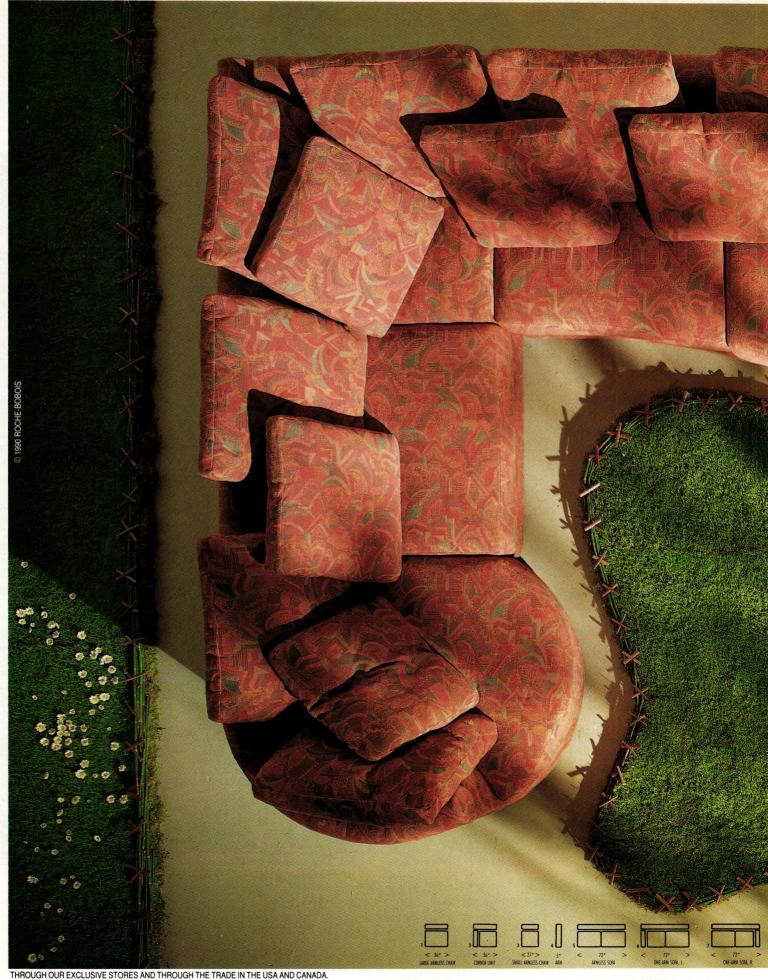
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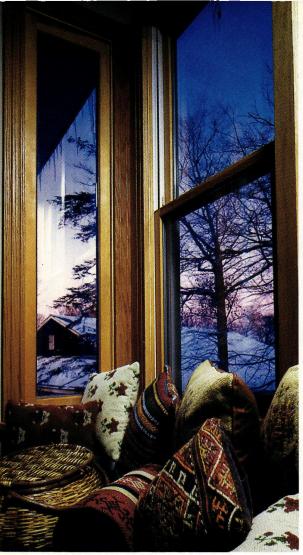
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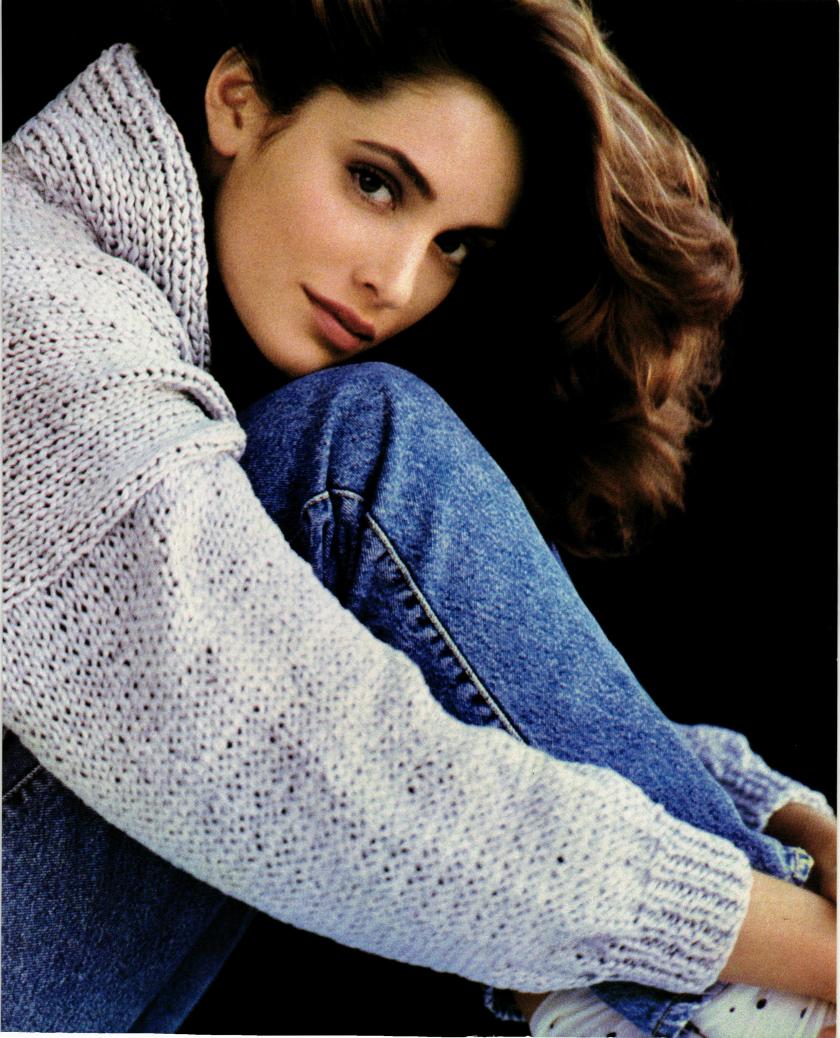
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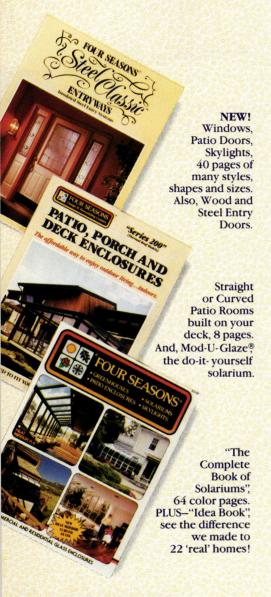




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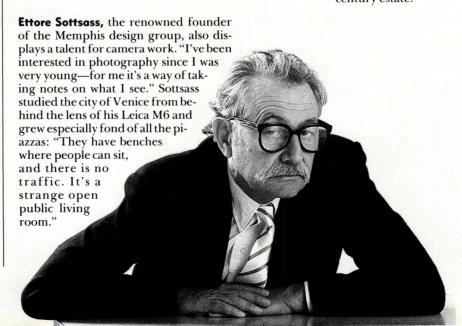
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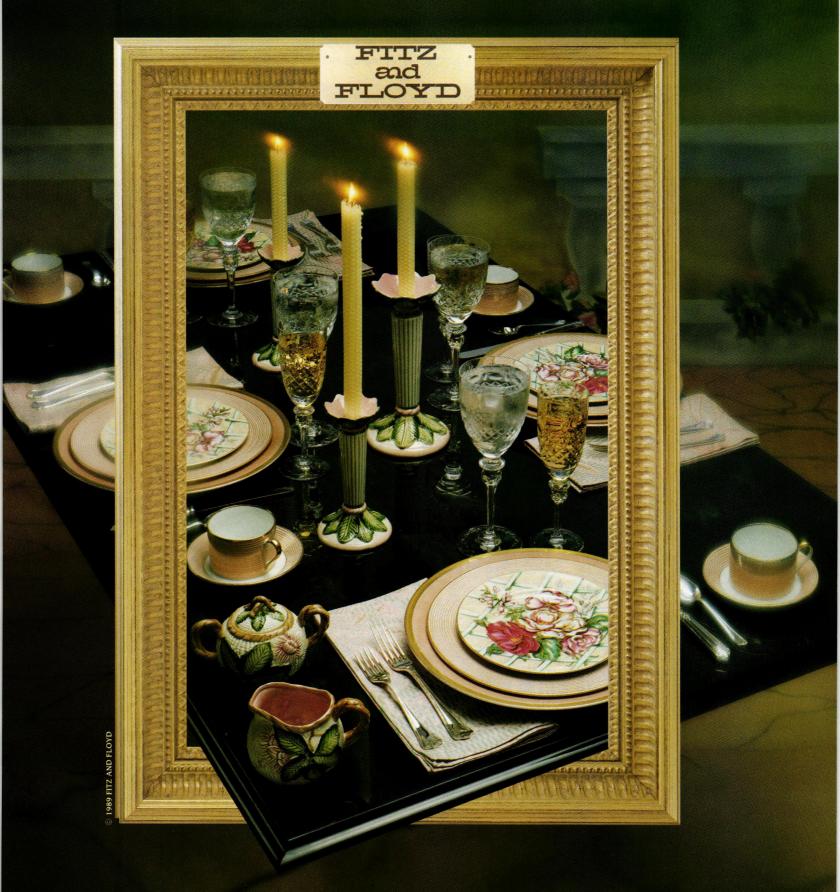
Prince Michael of Greece, a contributing editor of HG, shares the secrets of Maremma, a secluded region on the coast of Tuscany where he has vacationed for many years. "I spend most of the year living and working in New York and Paris. It's a delight to escape to this life-giving oasis," says Prince Michael, author of the French best-sellers Sultana and Le Palais des larmes. In between writing books, he interviews prominent people, from Empress Farah to Margaret Thatcher, for Parade magazine. He is currently writing a novel about Abdul Hamid, the last great sultan of Turkey.



Beatrice Monti della Corte says she wanted to offer a "glimpse of unknown sides of Italy," in the many articles she produced for this issue. An HG consulting editor, she developed her eye for the telling detail directing her Galleria dell'Ariete art gallery in Milan. She and her husband, Gregor von Rezzori, divide their time between New York and Italy. Rezzori, author of The Snows of Yesteryear, ventured the Italian Alps to write this month's article on Giorgio Franchetti's 17thcentury estate.



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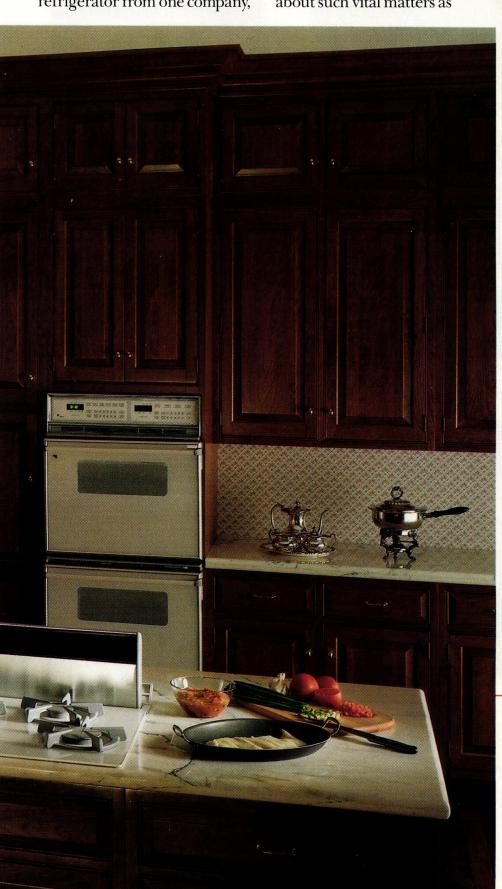
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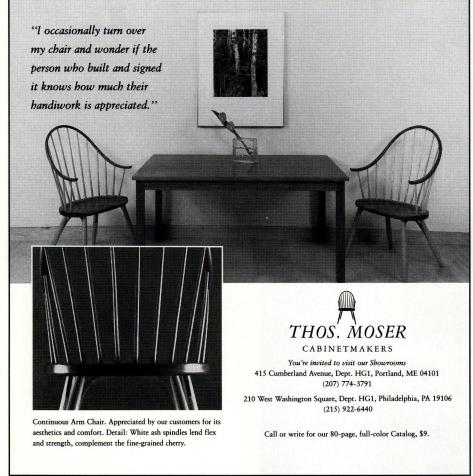


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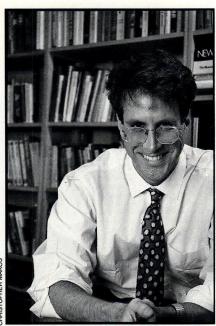


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Peter Haldeman, a new features editor at HG, has a long-standing involvement with the magazine. "My grandmother rarely threw out issues," he explains. "One day when I was about ten I was going through a stack of them at her house. There were a few cousins around, watching football on TV. My grandmother said loudly, 'Oh, Peter, do you like to look at interiors?' I said, 'No,' sheepishly put the magazines away, and joined everyone in front of the set. So here I am, coming clean—and making my own contribution to the family library.'

Andrew Solomon visits the Filacciano hideaway of Gian Enzo Sperone, "a man who has made significant contributions to the American and Italian art worlds." Solomon, a contributing editor of Harpers & Queen and currently at work on a book about Soviet art, writes for HG because "I have always been fascinated by beautiful things. The magazine is a forum for exploring cultural interests it's where aesthetics meets real life."



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The art of writing.

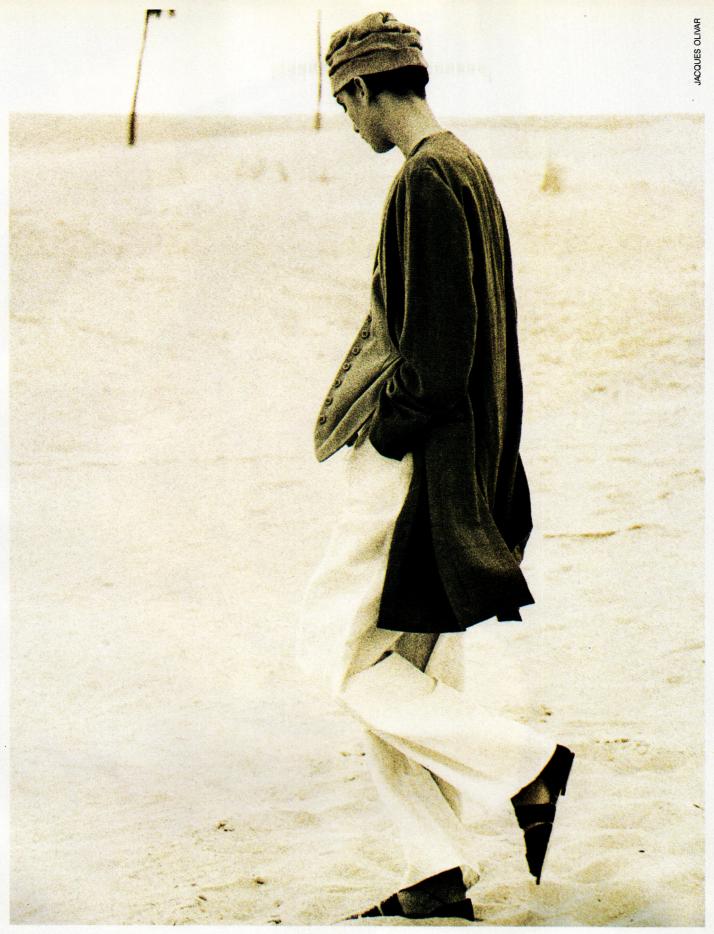
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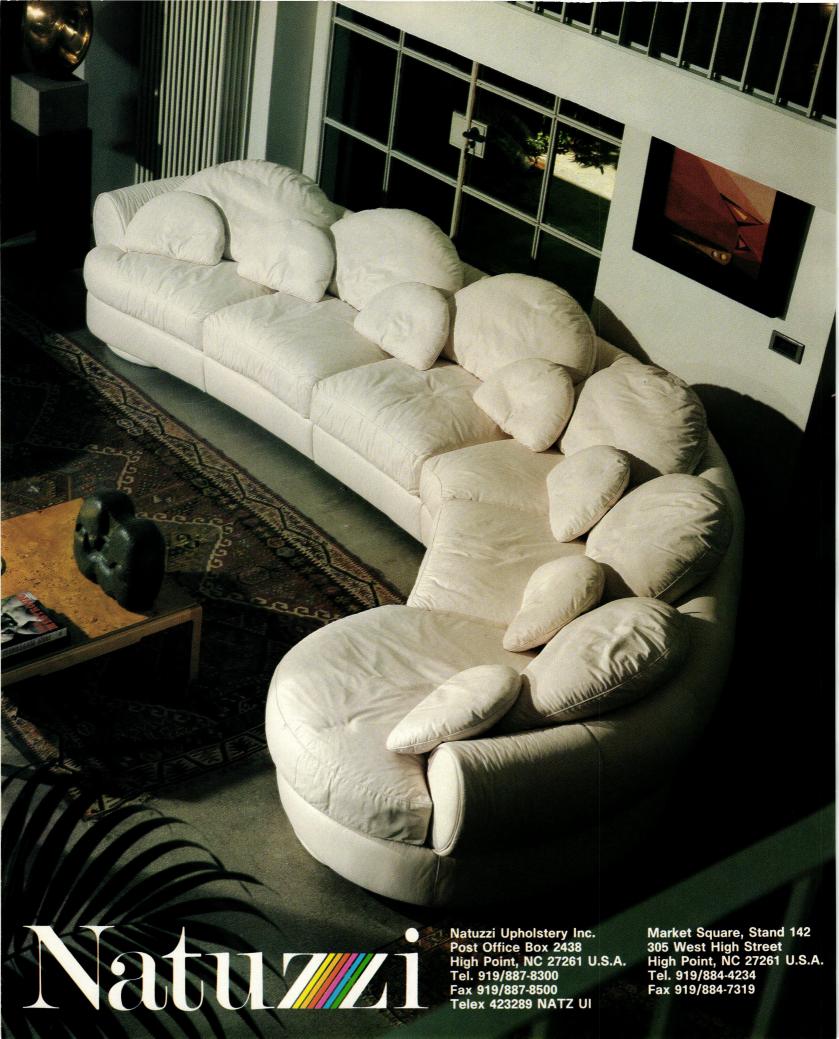
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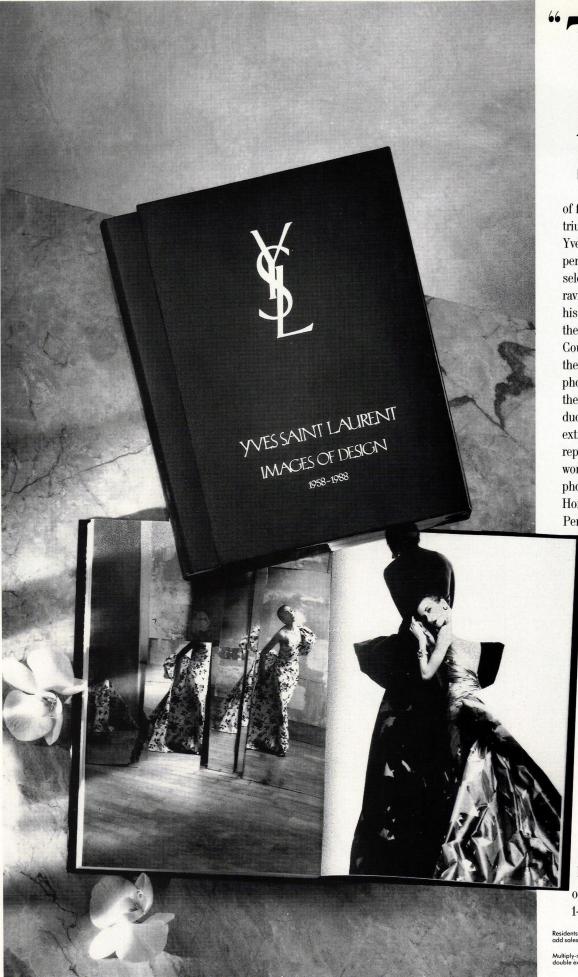
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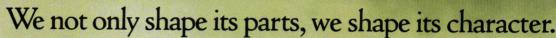
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Figures are for 3-ounce servings, cooked and rrimmed.* © 1988 Beet



6.4 gms total fat* .3 gms sat. fat) 162 calories



6 gms total fat* (3.0 gms sat. fat)



5.3 gms total fat* (1.8 ams sat. fat)



Source: U.S.D.A. Handbook No. 8-13



EYE OF ROUND 5.5 gms total fat* gms sat. fat)



TENDERLOIN 7.9 gms total fat* 1 gms sat. fat)



7.4 gms total fat* (3.0 gms sat. fat)

MOTES

HG REPORTS ON THE NEW AND THE NOTEWORTHY By Amy Abrams and Eric Berthold



Livia Monaco

takes brush to canvas and spatula to wall, making landscapes appear where none existed, transforming bare rooms into realms of color, texture, and light. A trompe l'oeil

artist and master of many media, Monaco specializes in stucco lustro, an intricate process that requires mixing lime, pigment, and water, applying it layer upon layer to a clean surface, and finishing it with polished beeswax. "Very few people know how to employ this technique, which gives walls the luminosity of opals. It is a dying craft and I want to preserve it," she explains. When Monaco is not working on commissions like the acrylic on canvas mural at right, she paints screens (above) in her SoHo studio. She also teaches at Parsons School of Design, where a new generation of would-be masters is studying the art of illusion. (Livia Monaco, 133 Greene St., New York, NY 10012; 212-473-5657)

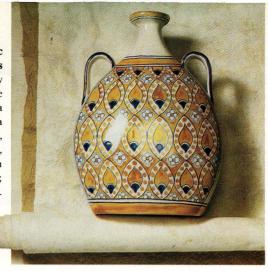


Stroke of Genius

The Lute Player (right) takes center stage in "A Caravaggio Rediscovered," at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Feb. 9-Apr. 22). Thematically related works by the artist and his contemporaries are also included, along with antique musical instruments.



Classic Curves An Early Renaissance design graces a Deruta majolica jug (right), \$220, at Avventura, 463 Amsterdam Avenue, NYC: (212) 769-2510.





Mozart Heads South Charleston's fourteenth annual Spoleto Festival U.S.A. (May 25-June 10) will feature a production of The Marriage of Figaro (left). For information

call (803) 722-2764.

Notes



Serve tea or coffee in grand style from the silver-plated spherical samovar (left), \$825. At Dean & DeLuca, NYC (212) 431-1691, outside NY (800) 221-7714.



Well-Dressed Sofa The glory that was Byzantium is recaptured in a new collection of pillows and sofa robes (above) that combines rich red velvet, gold embroidery, antique metallics, and braid with creamy silks. From Vesta Designs, call (203) 629-5740.



Perennial Pucci Behind the red door of the Pucci silk factory in Florence weavers continue to make fabrics (*above*) originally designed for the Medicis and other noble patrons. The fine silk, which can cost \$1,000 a meter, is available at Antico Setificio Fiorentino, Via L. Bartolini 4, 50125 Florence; (55) 213861.



Two for Tea Old gold decorates Claudio La Viola's new collection of jade green porcelain tabletop accessories. The Amadeus teacup and saucer (*left*), \$115, exemplify traditional Italian design. At Bergdorf Goodman, NYC (212) 753-7300.



Capital Idea Piero Fornasetti drew upon Classical architecture for his chairs (*above*), \$1,933 each. Made from molded laminated wood these column capitals support people's backs instead of pediments. At Norton Blumenthal, NYC (212) 752-2535.



Tile TalismanFirst Stone sun tile (*above*), \$55, is a Sicilian good luck charm. From Vietri, call (800) 277-5933.



The Grand Tour
Venetian Palaces (above),
\$95, due from Rizzoli
next month, takes
readers on a tour
of elegant façades
and sumptuous
palace interiors in
La Serenissima.



Adapted from an engraving after a painting by Canaletto, *The Grand Canal* (*above*), \$475, is a wallcovering that can make any space a room with a view. To the trade at Louis W. Bowen, call (212) 751-4470.

Venetian Hour Ancient byways of the lagoon will be explored by art historian Olivier Bernier in a lecture on medieval Venice (Apr. 12) at New York's Knickerbocker Club, to benefit the Save Venice group. Limited seating; call (212) 737-3141.

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Stamp of Approval Contemporary Italian furniture such as Sawaya and Moroni's Diva chair and Bonacina's Fidia chair and ottoman (*above left*), \$1,575 and \$2,800 respectively, is the specialty of Postmark. The shop also carries such classics as the aluminum Toledo chair (*above right*) by Jorge Pensi, \$550. At 333 Bryant Street, San Francisco; (415) 243-9780.

Bright Ideas

Benetton bursts into the house with linens for the bed (right) and accessories for the bath that exhibit the firm's trademark flair for color and pattern. The Home Colors collection comes Stateside this fall.



Notes

Perfect Specimen

On the block: the best specimens from the past ten years of the Annual Rare Plant Auction (below) (Apr. 27), at Longwood Gardens, Kennett Square, Penn.
Tickets are \$60. Call (302) 658-1913.



Bella Basin Delicate hand-painted Renaissance motifs decorate a porcelain basin (*above*), \$1,200, by Christine Belfor Design, NYC. The Classical Grisaille pattern is one of several designs in her HPS collection. To order, call (212) 722-5410.



Pick of the Past Fine marquetry distinguishes the c.1780 commode (*above*), \$225,000, from dealer Frederick P. Victoria's stock of exquisite 18th- and 19th-century Italian and other European furniture and objects. At 154 East 55th Street, NYC.



The apple and plum jam jars (right), \$1,450 each, are made of Venetian glass with hand-wrought sterling lids and spoons. At Buccellati, NYC (212) 308-2900. Outside NY (800) 223-7885.







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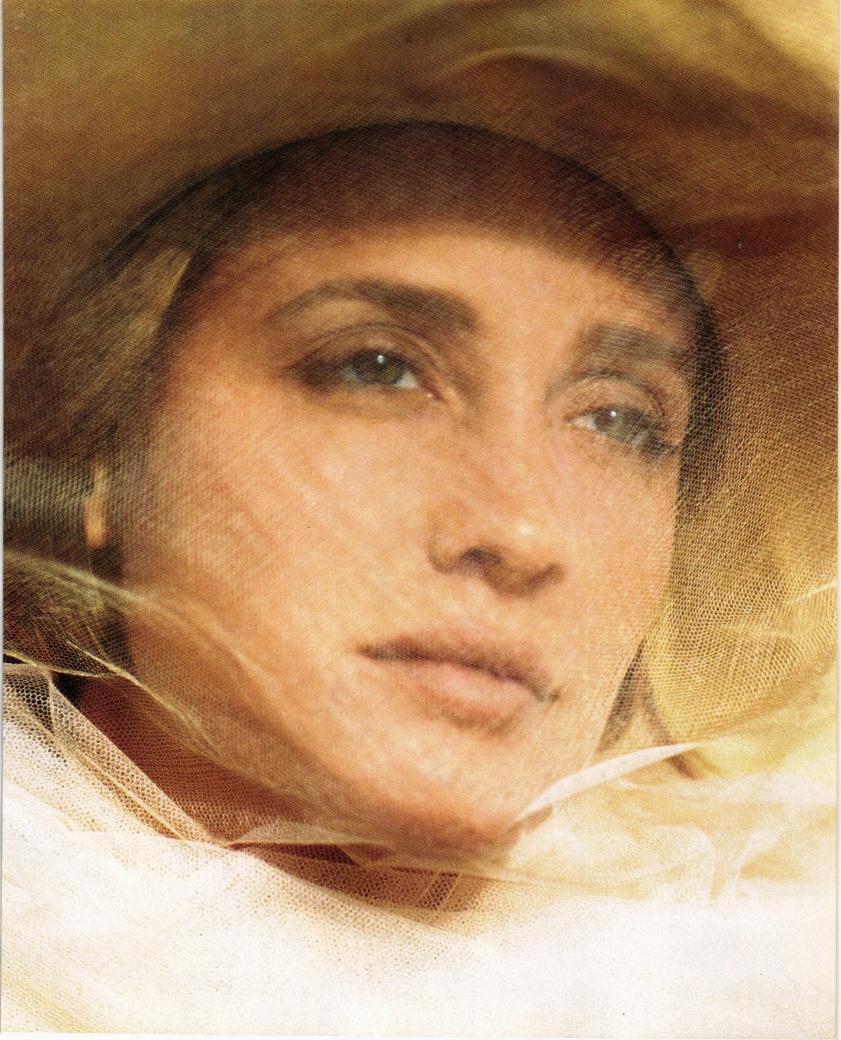
A personal adventure and way of life

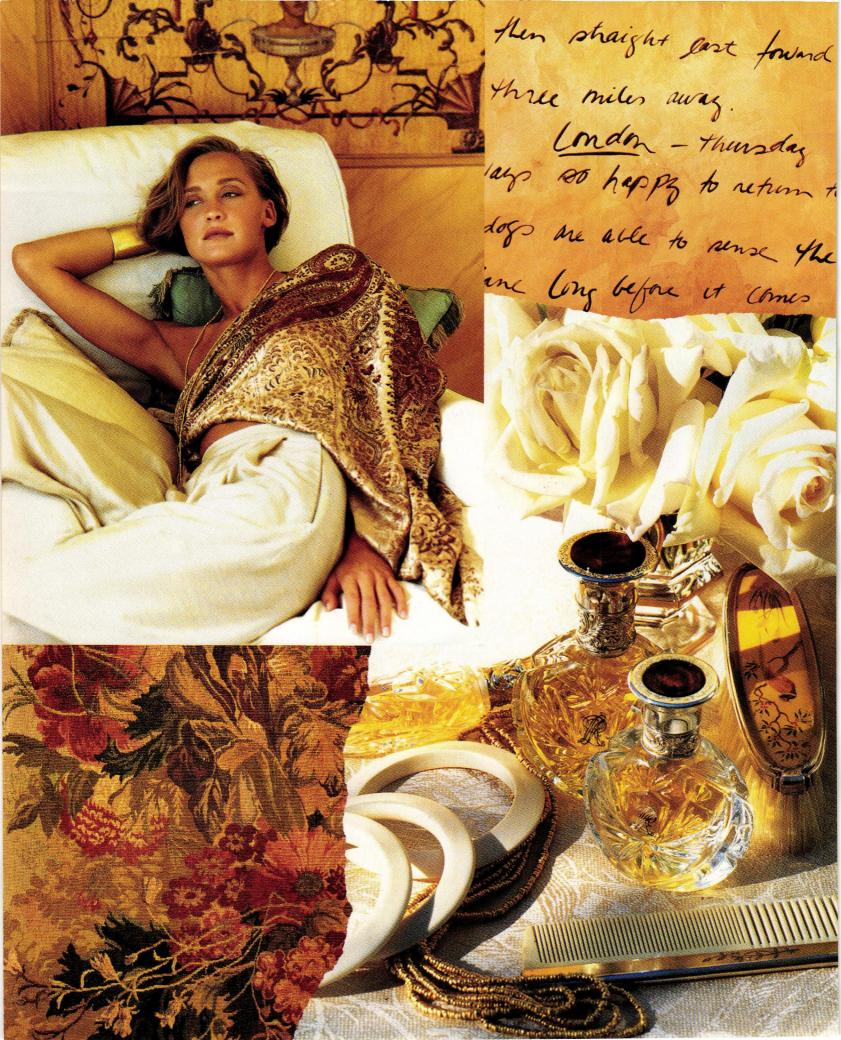


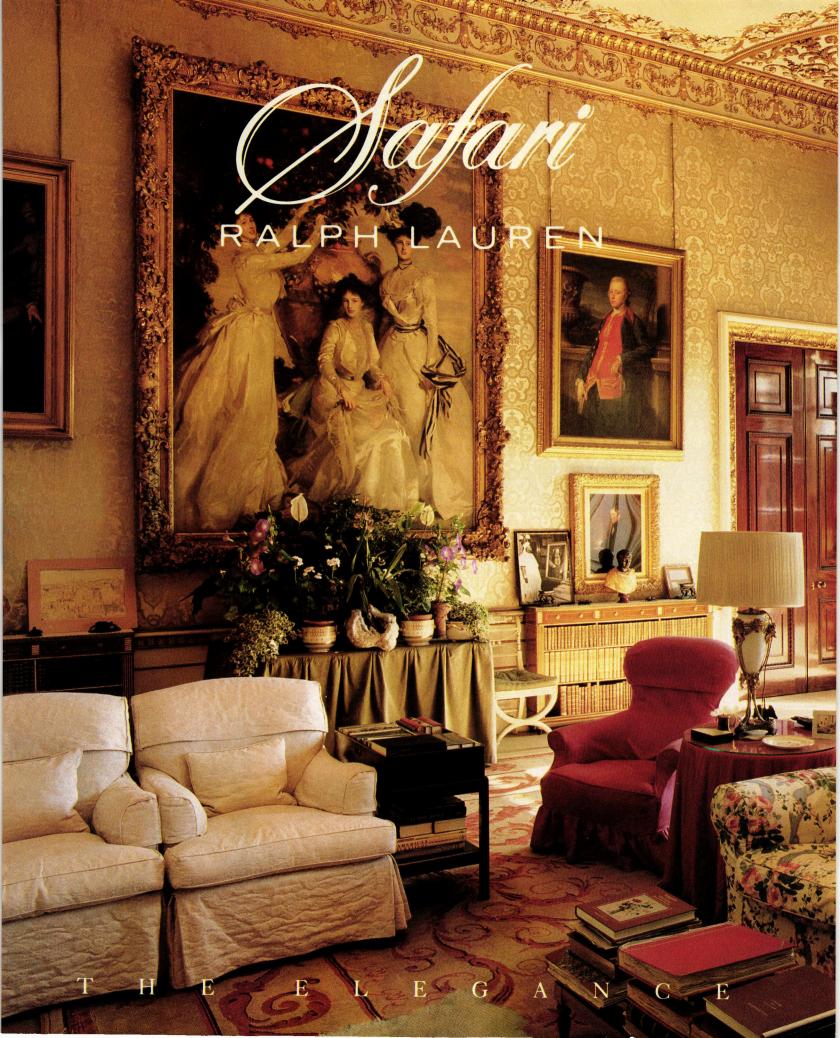
Coloure RALPH LAUREN

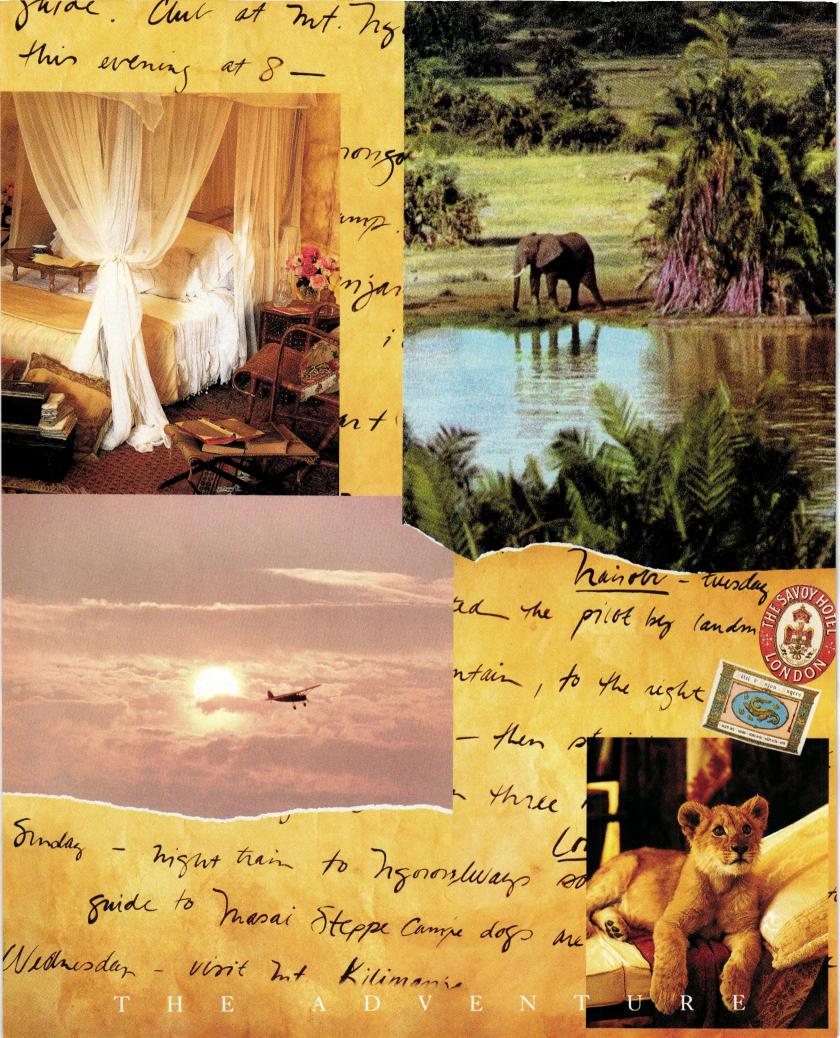


A PERSONAL ADVENTURE







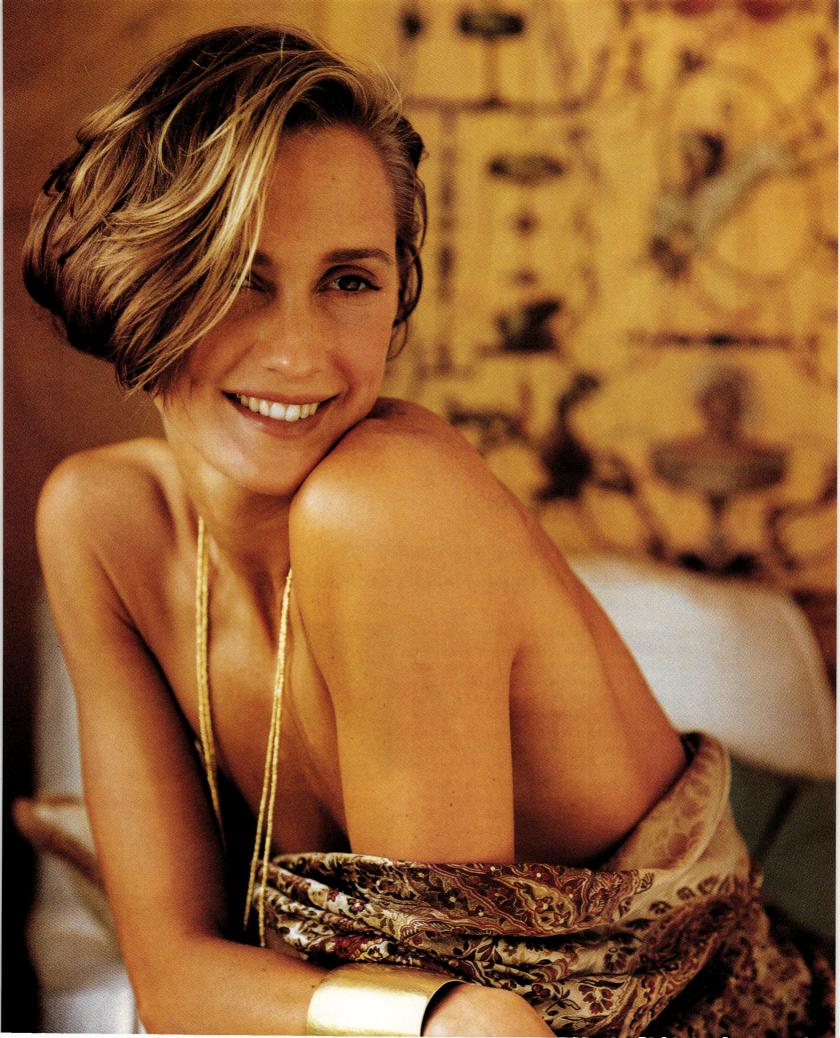














Coastal Attractions

History and highlands beckon in villages along the Maremma shoreline. By Prince Michael of Greece

roadly speaking, the Maremma region spans the southern coast of Tuscany-it has no firm delimitations. Purists maintain that it covers the area between Pisa and Tarquinia, the entire former territory of the Etruscans, but I prefer to locate the Maremma in its heartland, which lies between the large modernized townships of Cecina and Follonica. Tourist and gastronomic guides remain curiously silent on the subject of this out-of-the-way region, which is a stroke of great good fortune: few travelers stop here on their way up or down the dreaded Via Aurelia, the ancient Roman road that crosses the Maremma from north to south. With its convoys of impassable trucks, shoals of cars that shark around them nonetheless, and other Italian motorists crawling along like snails, the Via Aurelia has become one of Italy's worst nightmares. When, in a few years time, this deafening thoroughfare is replaced by an autostrada, those who travel along it will no doubt be even less tempted to pause and penetrate the secrets of the adjacent Maremma.

In antiquity the Etruscans occupied the region, leaving tombs, many painted with frescoes, all over the countryside. Some belong to celebrated necropolises like those excavated

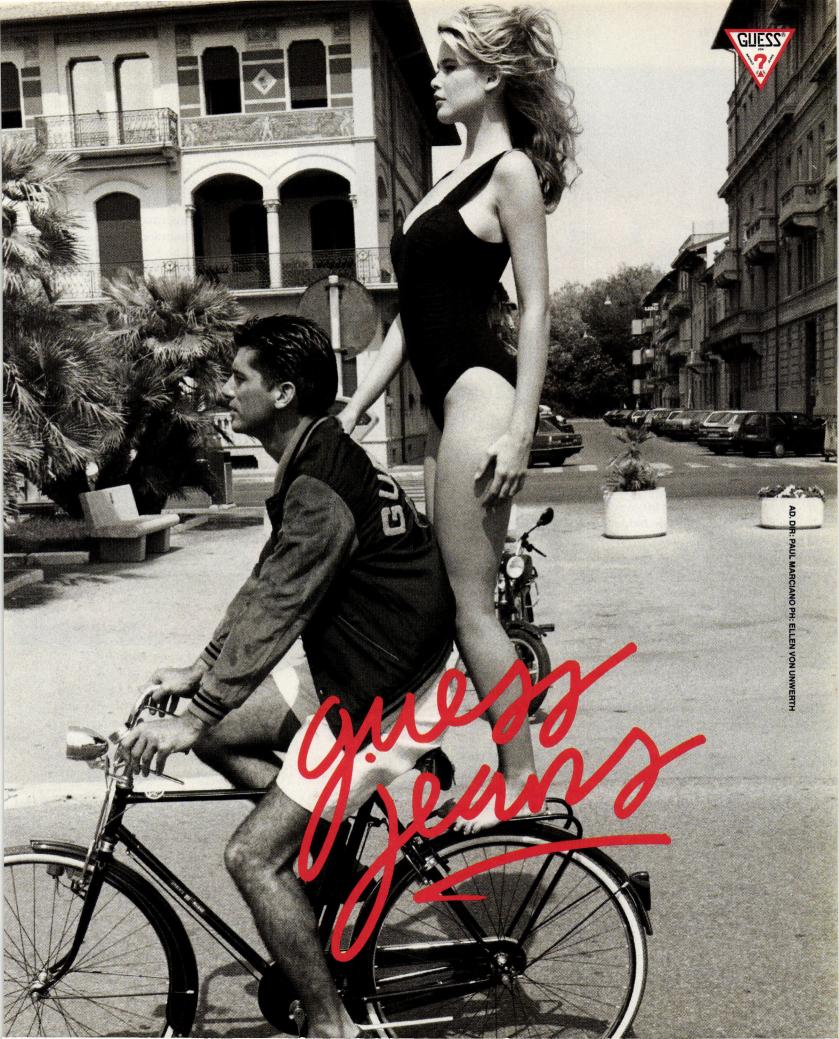






A centuries-old house outside the village of Bibbona, top. Above: The walls of the fortress in Massa Marittima.

Above left: In a fresco, wild game dominates the local fare. Left: The street life of Bibbona.





All of the Maremma villages are alike—and no two are the same

not far from Populonia, a fortified village on a cliff overlooking the sea; others are hidden in the distant fields and woods where they remain inviolate.

Throughout the Middle Ages the Maremma region belonged to a single family, the conti della Gherardesca, whose principal occupation was the defense of the

coastline against Saracen raiders. According to Dante, the most celebrated of these counts, Ugolino, was captured by his enemies and left to die of hunger in a dungeon where he devoured the flesh of his own sons—an exploit that inspired not only a long passage in the *Divine Comedy* but also a large number of nineteenth-century paintings and sculptures.

During the Renaissance a Gherardesca aunt, out of malice toward her nephews, sold her land to the Serristori, a Florentine banking family, who constructed a magnificent villa that was burned to the ground by German troops during World War II. The castles that survive were all built by the Gherardescas. These former strongholds are Castagneto, the family seat, a fortress with an interior pleasingly adapted during the nineteenth century; Segalari, a Neo-Gothic pile whose ruins rise above abundant vegetation; and Bolgheri, which boasts the world's loveliest cypress avenue, a three-mile tunnel of trees that has been celebrated by many a poet.

The noble landowners rarely set foot in the Maremma until this century. The name of the region comes from the pestiferous swamps that once straddled its lower reaches, balefully



A castle in Bolgheri, top, where time stands still and a cypress avenue stretches for miles, above right. Above: The shores of Populonia.

generating malaria and other dank diseases; the Medicis of Florence banished their opponents here, and for several hundred years the Maremma was left at the mercy of banditi. Today descendants of the bandits, most of whom are Sardinians, live in the impenetrable backcountry, the marshes are fruit orchards, and the titled owners have returned. (The supermarket cashier in the village of Donoratico keeps a copy of the Italian who's who of nobility within reach in order to tell her principal clients apart.)

The Gherardescas occupy villas admirably designed in the 1920s along the

beaches of the Tuscan coast—where one can contemplate the island of Elba and, on clear days, the distant Corsican mountains—and farther back among

flat, slightly monotonous

the dunes, with their thick covering of



huge pines and scented shrubs. When, in the 1950s, the habitual calm of the Maremma was threatened by development, members of the noble clan had the wisdom to transform their properties into preserves for the local fauna and flora, thereby avoiding the leprosy of motels, advertising billboards, and camping sites.

Perhaps most important of all, no thoroughfare was authorized to cut through the woodlands. The forests begin exactly at the junction of flat farmland and hills: a wide expanse of treemantled wilderness populated by wild boar and other woodland creatures. The sole indication that they were ever otherwise occupied is the occasional glimpse of a seventeenth-century farmhouse deep in the undergrowth.

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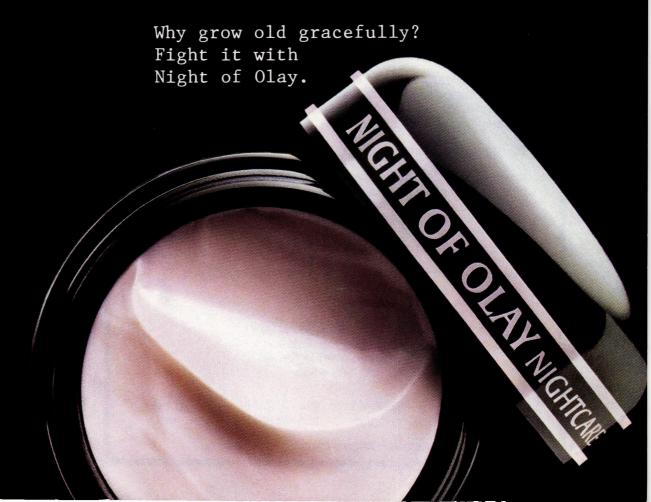
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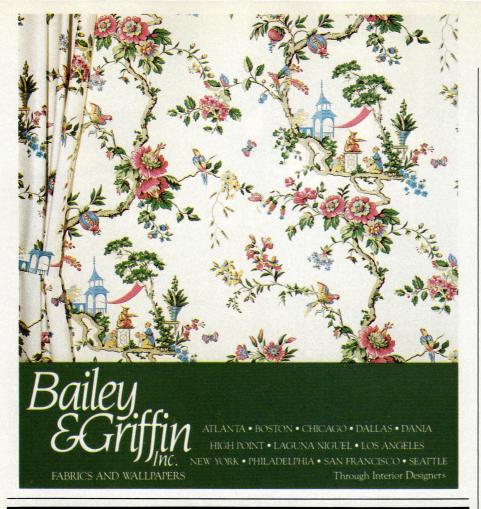
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Dozens of narrow byways lead off the Via Aurelia to wind around orchards and the adjacent wooded slopes. They will bring you to villages that have remained unaltered for centuries: Casale Marittimo, Bibbona, Sassetta, Suvereto, and Campiglia Marittima. All these places are alike—and no two of them are the same. From a distance their old tiled roofs seem to be stacked on top of one another, in a kind of pyramid culminating in the bell tower of a church or the ramparts of a fortress. Apart from the charm of their steep, sometimes vaulted alleys and irregular piazzas, each of these villages has special features to offer the determined visitor.

The ancient and little-known city of Massa Marittima possesses a Romanesque cathedral and the delicate cloister of Saint Augustine, tucked modestly behind massive fortress walls. Other towns conceal Gothic palaces, civic buildings sprouting arms and escutcheons, Etruscan tombs, and altarpieces of wonderful beauty in modest chapels.

Visiting these villages is like embarking on a treasure hunt for which one needs both luck and the iron will to compel the opening of locked doors and sanctuaries. Most guides imply that there is not a single hotel or restaurant in the entire Maremma region. Don't believe it. Every village, every forgotten hamlet has its own small hotel, usually old and always delightful. You can obtain directions to an albergo from the proprietor of the local trattoria, which even in the deepest countryside is not difficult to find.

Naturally enough, the cooking of the region is dominated by the local wild game, with dozens of different recipes for wild boar and rabbit, such as pappardelle alla lepre, a delicate pasta in a tomato and red wine sauce filled with garden vegetables and chunks of hare. Fortunately—for these delicious dishes are nothing if not heavy on the stomach—the Maremma wines are young, refreshing, and stimulating.

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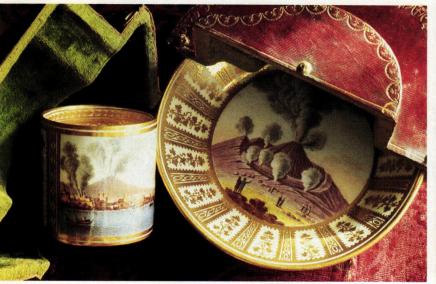
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Courtly Souvenirs

Under royal patronage, Neapolitan porcelain captured the flavor of everyday life. By OLIVIER BERNIER



hen porcelain making was at the cutting edge of technology and the secrets of its manufacture were as zealously guarded as those of the state itself, it behooved a good king to see that his country produced its own version of this fragile commodity. An added incentive, of course, was that the royal apartments could then be graced by some of the most enchanting and coveted objects ever made.

The first European porcelain manufacture was set up at Meissen in Saxony in 1710, and other countries soon followed. That early on distant exotic Naples rivaled the likes of Vienna, Sèvres, and even Meissen might seem a little surprising. But in fact, the porcelain of Capodimonte—substituting charm and vividness for sophistication—is among the most appealing ever produced.

Much of the credit for this achievement goes to Charles III, king of the Two Sicilies. A clever if startlingly ugly monarch, Charles ruled his inherited domain in the most enlightened fashion. And it was he who decided to create a porcelain manufacture, thus promoting the arts and the sciences while raising the reputation of his kingdom. In this endeavor the king was urged on by his wife, Queen Maria Amalia, daughter of the elector of Saxony. Having brought Meissen porcelain as part of her dowry, this ambitious, notoriously mean-tempered woman felt it was time for her new country to rival the old. And so in 1741 in a forested area just outside Naples known as Capodimonte a factory was built expressly for the production of porcelain.



From the beginning a strict division of labor prevailed: each specialist knew just what his job was-whether the preparation of new models or their actual manufacture. No one could guess at all this disciplined work, however, by looking at the results. Frivolity is the keynote when it comes to this first phase of Capodimonte, best exemplified by Queen Maria Amalia's salottino in the Capodimonte palace, now open as a museum. Here every wall of a not so small bou-

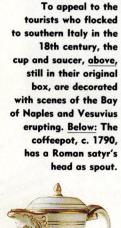
doir is encrusted with porcelain. Festoons of fruit and flowers link musical trophies, animals, and large plaques depicting scenes of life in China. There are baskets of fruit, life-size parrots, ribbons, dragons, and bearded sages, all reflected in large inset mirrors so that the room appears to be the center of an endless Rococo fantasy.

The very exuberance of the salottino is typically Neapolitan, and even if the details are not as refined as those of Sèvres porcelain, it hardly matters: spontaneity and charm are equally commanding. The same is true of a great number of small boldly colored figurines. Some represent standard subjects, such as cupids and commedia dell'arte characters, but

the most appealing are those that capture life in Naples of the 1740s and '50s. There are street vendors hawking everything from fish to picture frames, eager lovers, aristocratic couples, even a risqué scene or two.



Profiles of the Capodimonte factory's second royal patron, Ferdinand IV, and his family surround the gilded cup and saucer, above. Right: A comical figural group, c. 1750, featuring a leering professor and his student.







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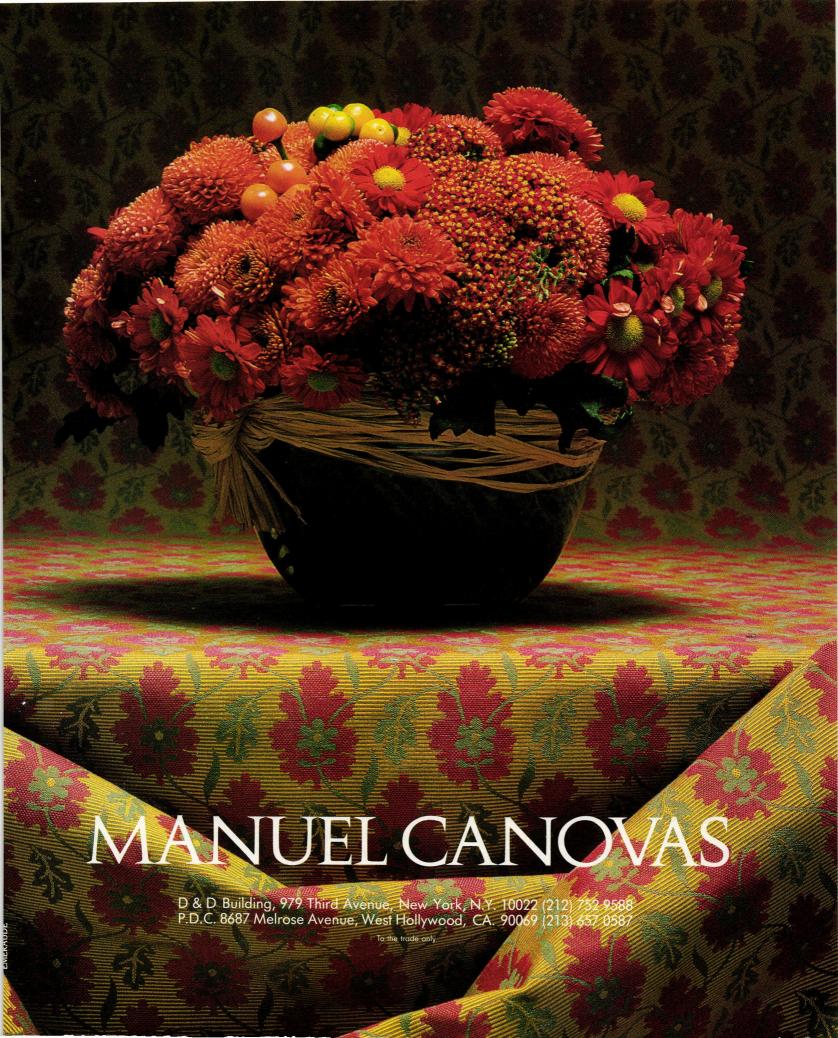
ANTIQUES

Naturally all this was expensive, and Capodimonte, its popularity notwithstanding, never broke even under Charles III, but that never bothered him. In 1759, when Charles inherited the throne of Spain, he passed on Naples and Sicily to his eight-year-old son, Ferdinand IV, and closed Capodimonte, not wanting his heir to share in its glories. The factory wasn't reopened until 1771, when Ferdinand, in a rare show of tact, gave it a new name—the Reale Fabbrica Ferdinandea—and larger premises in Naples itself.

By then the court had lofty ambitions: Ferdinand's wife, Queen Maria Carolina, like her sister Marie Antoinette, placed prestige and showy luxury at the top of her agenda. And Ferdinand, who was interested in nothing but hunting and sex, was always willing to be presented as an enlightened ruler. A porcelain manufacture fit admirably into both of these schemes. Timed perfectly to a boom in tourism, the new porcelain became the favored souvenir of well-to-do travelers who flocked to the Bay of Naples after making obligatory stops at Pompeii and Herculaneum. Plates, platters, and entire dinner services embellished with illustrations of the dramatic local landscapes and colorfully dressed people served as treasured mementos for these visitors.

In all its frivolous spontaneity, Capodimonte was a perfect incarnation of the ancien régime. It barely survived a revolution in 1799; then in 1806 the reinstated Ferdinand decided production was too expensive and nonessential. The manufacture was sold to a private company and the great era of Capodimonte ended. Still, today, surviving pieces provide glimpses of a gloriously beautiful period in Neapolitan history. The bay appears as it did before it was lined with cheap high rises. Volcanoes erupt, peasants dance, and the middle class, amusingly depicted in a series of figurines, shows us just how to be fashionable in the last twenty years of the eighteenth century.

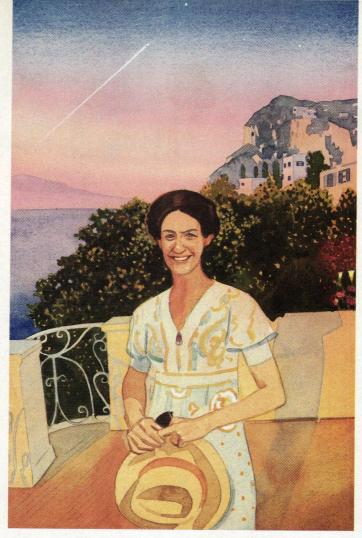
For more information on the history of Capodimonte porcelain see Le porcellane dei Borboni di Napoli (Naples: Guida, 1986) by Angela Carola-Perrotti, who was a consulting editor on this story.



f the millions who visit Italy each year, some thousands will return there "to live": to spend a season or a year or two. Of these, a few will remain all their lives. If they are painters, writers, or musicians, they will carry on their trade in an ambiance that still esteems the individual effort of art. If they are scholars, they must take their chances in the gladiatorial arena of Italian erudition. Others may develop a career or, more usually, eke out a living with expatriate odd jobs. And there are some who can afford idleness in that peninsula where the cult of leisure flourishes yet and where variety and pleasure can fill up many, though not all, days. No longer visitors, never to be natives, these people have arrived without the grim compulsions of migrants or refugees, and they move for the most part easily through the Italian dance, with excursions to their homeland. For a measure of affluence takes, these days, the edge off finality's blade, and mobility suggests —delusively—that every

journey is potentially a round-trip.

Those of us who, when young, chose "to live" in the Italy of the postwar decade felt we were doing just that: living more completely among the scenes and sentiments of a humanism the new world could not provide. The Italian admixture of immediacy and continuity, of the long perspective and the intensely personal, was then reasserting itself after years of eclipse. It was a time not of affluence but of hope, and Italy again offered to travelers her antique genius for human relations—a tact, an expansiveness never without form. One was drawn, too, by beauty that owed as much



Italian Hours

A footloose novelist finds home in southern Italy

BY SHIRLEY HAZZARD

to centuried endurance as to the luminosity of art and which seemed, then, to create an equilibrium as lasting as nature's. Like the historian Jakob Burckhardt, we felt all this was ours "by right of admiration."

I was warned, as all are who pursue their dream, that "reality" would soon set in—warned by those who define reality as a sequence of salutary disappointments. I was reminded that immemorial outsiders had followed that same cisalpine path. Yet one trusted to the private revelation. Of her time in Rome, Elizabeth Bowen wrote: "If my discoveries are other people's commonplaces I can-

not help it—for me they retain a momentous freshness." And so, for most of us, it was and is.

I was fortunate when I first lived in Italy in being obliged to work for a year in Naples, a city that in its postwar dereliction had been virtually erased from the modern travel itinerary as arcane and insalubrious (and which for the same reasons remains little touched by tourism today-the last great Italian city whose monuments retain their animate, authentic context). In an old seaside house, Pompeian red, I had high humid rooms and a view that swept the bay-city and volcano, the long Sorrentine cape, and the island of Capri, which floated far or near according to the light. No expatriate English-speaking network existed to modify my ardor or palliate hard lessons. Then in my early twenties, I had lived around the world but had never previously seen Italy, never been there as a footloose tourist, and thus had no adjustment to make. To visit a beautiful country on holiday is a freedom, a suspension. To reside there is a commitment for which one

must not only forfeit much of the indulgence that Italy extends to visitors but subdue, also, the visitor in oneself.

From other loved Italian places, the bay of Naples drew me back—to white rooms on Capri long ago and also, of recent years, to another sea-bound house on the Neapolitan shore. My worktable faces a blank wall, for the sights of Siren Land are no aid to concentration. Even so, throughout the day my husband and I call one another—to see the light on Vesuvius, the red ship, the colored sails, the fishermen hauling nets, and the wave breaking over Roman walls.

The "reality" prefigured to me, like a

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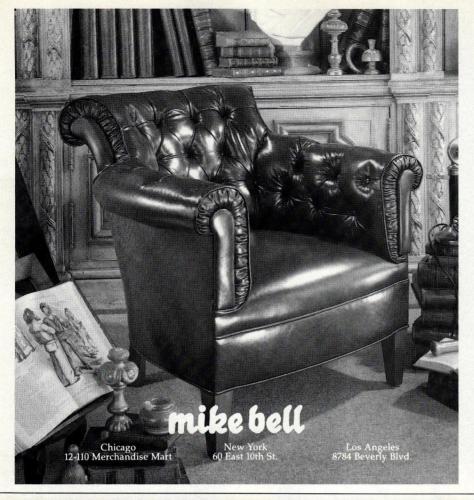
available at Lord and Taylor

WRITER IN RESIDENCE

spread of wet cement, never did "set in." But by definition a leap through the looking glass disturbs one's self-image, and I had to learn something of my own ignorance. Intimacy with another country is ripened by pleasures but also by loneliness and error. It is nurtured through long wet winters as well as radiant days and through the fluctuations of mood inevitable to any strong attachment. The colorful scene will not compensate indefinitely for a sense of exclusion from the exchange of thought and wit. The early hospitality of the Italian tongue in daily matters is little preparation for its exigency in the expression of ideas, and the outsider genially praised for his declarative sentences cannot suspect that years may pass before this elusive language becomes as flexible and spontaneous as his own. The many resident foreigners who remain visitors forever, hovering eternally at a rim, have recoiled from these rigors and may applaud Italian joys or deplore Italian ills, responsible for neither. Yet a life without responsibility can pall, and most such people will go home at last, having exhausted not Italy but their own capacity for aimlessness.

In Italy we learn, as W. H. Auden noted, "That surfaces need not be superficial/Nor gestures vulgar" and that, since Italian life is to some extent a performance—an idea of the self played out with style—responsiveness and good manners do not guarantee depth and consistency. We learn, too, that the ability to rise to the moment, to the human occasion, is linked to a sense of mortality intrinsic, in Italy, to all that pleases us.

Life in Italy is seldom simple. One does not go there for simplicity, but for interest: to make the adventure of existence more vivid, more poignant. I have known that country through dire as well as golden times and have dwelt in town and country, north and south. Whether I wake these mornings in Naples to the Mediterranean lapping the seawall or on Capri to the sight of a nobly indifferent mountain, it is never without realizing, in surprise and gratitude, that it all came to pass and that I—like Goethe, like Byron—am living in Italy.





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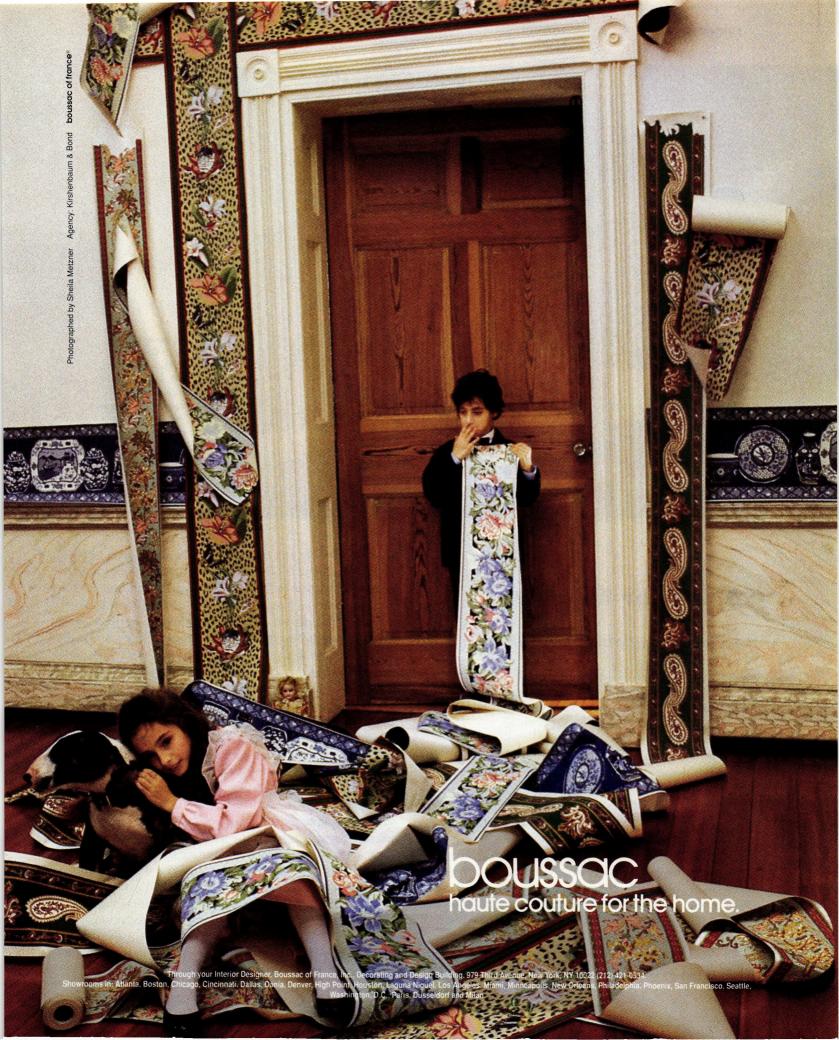
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At the new Luigi
Pecci Center for
Contemporary Art,
left, skylights form
a dramatic profile
against the Tuscan
sky. Bottom: Anne
and Patrick Poirier's
1988 stainless-steel
sculpture Exegi
Monumentum Aere
Perennius.

Forum for the Arts

A new contemporary museum surveys the international scene from an Italian point of view By Martin Filler

he worldwide flood of new museums during the eighties made a curious detour around Italy. Perhaps it was because the country that has been termed an "art slum" has such a difficult time tending to its existing treasures that the construction of buildings for new art appears unseemly when so much old art is falling apart. Now, however, Italy has a new contemporary art museum that fills one of the most glaring gaps on that country's otherwise rich cultural landscape. The Centro per l'Arte Contemporanea Luigi

Pecci, in the small Tuscan city of Prato, eight miles west of Florence, has recently opened and in one bold gesture brings Italy into the international circuit of modern art museums from which it had been

so conspicuously and inexplicably missing. Rome's Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, for example, is pretty much a joke, with not even the influential twentieth-century art of Italy particularly well represented. Aside from commercial galleries in Milan, Rome, Turin, and Florence, there had been little opportunity for the Italian public to view new art, so the Pecci Center, which has its own permanent collection in addition to playing host to traveling exhibitions, instantly assumes an important place in the nation's aesthetic life.

Designed by Italo Gamberini, the architecture of the Pecci Center regrettably is not up to the superior standard recently set by a number of his countrymen, including Renzo Piano's Menil Collection in Houston and Gae Aulenti and Antonio Foscari's Palazzo Grassi in Venice. The steeply pitched skylights create a lively silhouette, but the coarse forms and detailing of much of the structure below the roofline make this a disappointing statement from a country with so much architectural talent. However, the proximity of this combination museum, study center, archive, and performing arts venue to one of the most traveled tourist districts of Italy assures a ready-made international audience that will make the Pecci

Center a major cultural force quite aside from its lack of architectural impact. It augurs well for a 2,500-year-old creative tradition that can now be brought convincingly into a new millennium. ▲



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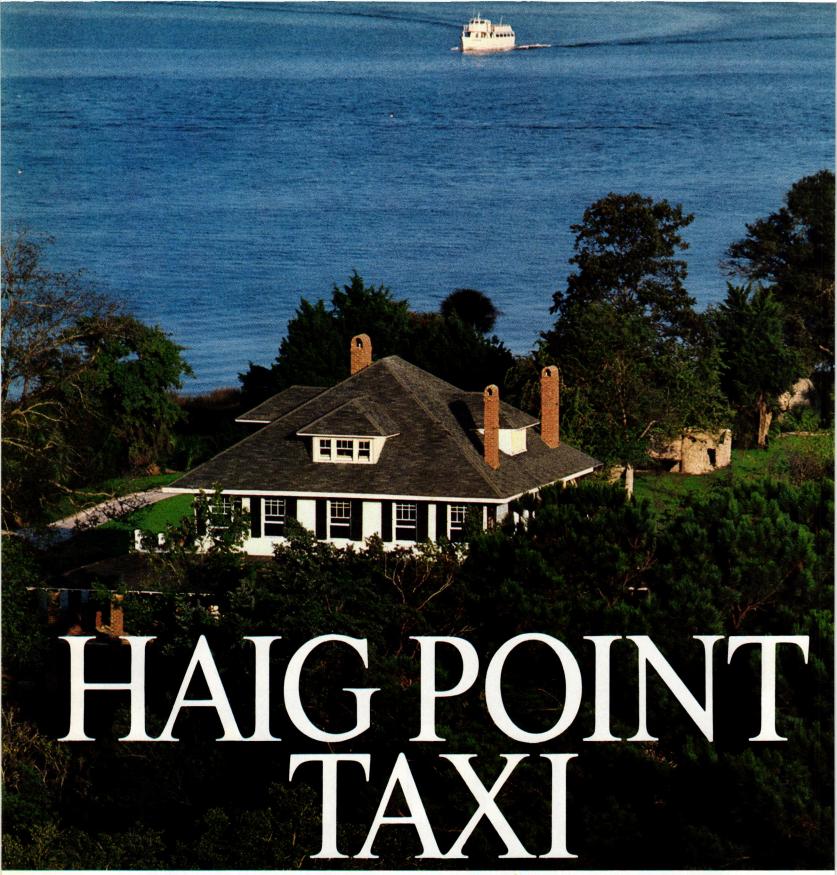




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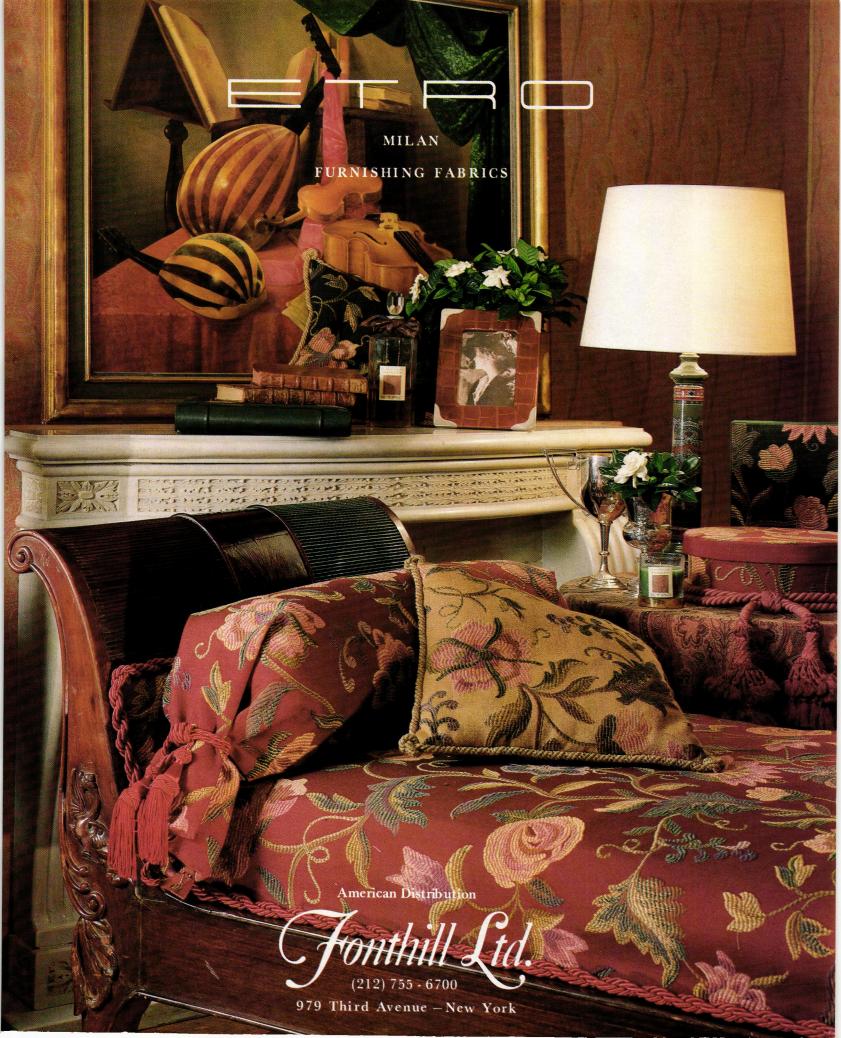
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Milan Paradiso

For those in the know, Dino Franzin's antiques gallery is heaven on earth

By Martin Filler

Leave when money is no object, it's still not easy to get exactly what you want, as the exasperated seekers after glory in decorating all too often discover. Finding the really good stuff is so difficult that dependable sources for truly extraordinary things—especially antiques—is jealously guarded insider information among the world's top decorators and collectors. They know better than to tip off the competition as to where the most stupendous gold lacquer Regency daybed can be had or a dozen Russian Neoclassical dining chairs that put most others on the market to shame or twelve terra-cotta busts of the deities of Parnassus or four splendid eighteenth-century gold and white majolica panels. Those, at the moment, can be found at the Milan gallery of Dino Franzin, a dealer who has been content to keep his small but devoted clientele as much of a secret as they do him.

Virtually unknown to the nonprofessional public beyond a small coterie of collectors—even that fortunate segment of it that could afford to be his customers—Franzin houses his

> thriving business in a palazzo-like enfilade of large rooms on the sixth floor of a discreet building at 7 Corso Matteotti, off the fashionable Via Montenapoleone. He lives above the store, occupying a rooftop flat of considerably greater intimacy and coziness than the grand saloni on the floor below.

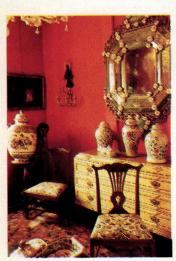
> Franzin's sumptuous stock is neither for the self-effacing nor the budgetminded. Grandeur is the unifying theme among his richly embellished large-scale showpieces, which carry correspondingly lofty price tags. "Stavros Niarchos calls me the 'big thief'—you

can ask him," confesses Franzin with a hearty laugh. This is international tycoon taste, remarkably unchanged since the teens and twenties: lots of gilding, crystal, rare woods, and ormolu mounts. Objects that other dealers would deem too impractical or bizarre or difficult to sell find a natural home with Franzin—but not for long. A brisk turnover is ensured by his intuitive understanding of his clients, mainly those who retain the services of Franzin's best patron, Italy's master decorator Renzo Mongiardino. Nonetheless, against the tangerine-colored walls of Franzin's showrooms those pala-

Dino Franzin, right, favors sumptuous treasures such as, below right, a 17th-century painting by Evaristo Baschenis and a pair of 18th-century Piedmontese consoles and mirrors.

Below: A rare Venetian mirror with white porcelain flowers and a garniture of delft covered jars.







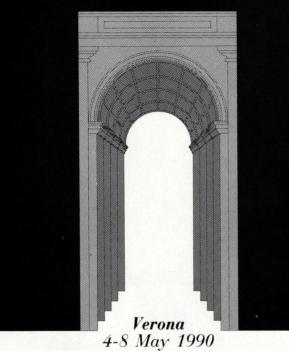
An 18th-century Belgian terra-cotta bust of a goddess, right

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tial pieces seem as though they have been there forever—and by implication, will look that way in your house, too.

Franzin has no need to keep a high public profile in order to reach his potential audience, so tiny is it. Not for him the international circuit of antiques shows or full-page ads in prestigious magazines. Nor does he cultivate the scholarly aura that makes many high-end dealers seem more like museum curators. Franzin's range, which encompasses Italian, French, English, Spanish, and Russian antiques, is too wide to fit into the collector-oriented realm of specialist dealers who can sell more on the basis of rarity than on sheer aesthetic impact. Though he always has a number of museum-quality pieces on hand, they are there for their decorative appeal.

Franzin gives so many dinner parties in his flat and gallery that Milanese wags have dubbed him Pranzin—pranzo being the Italian word for meal. But his astute social instinct has led one international friend to call him the "Metternich of antiquaires." He was the host, for example, of the memorable

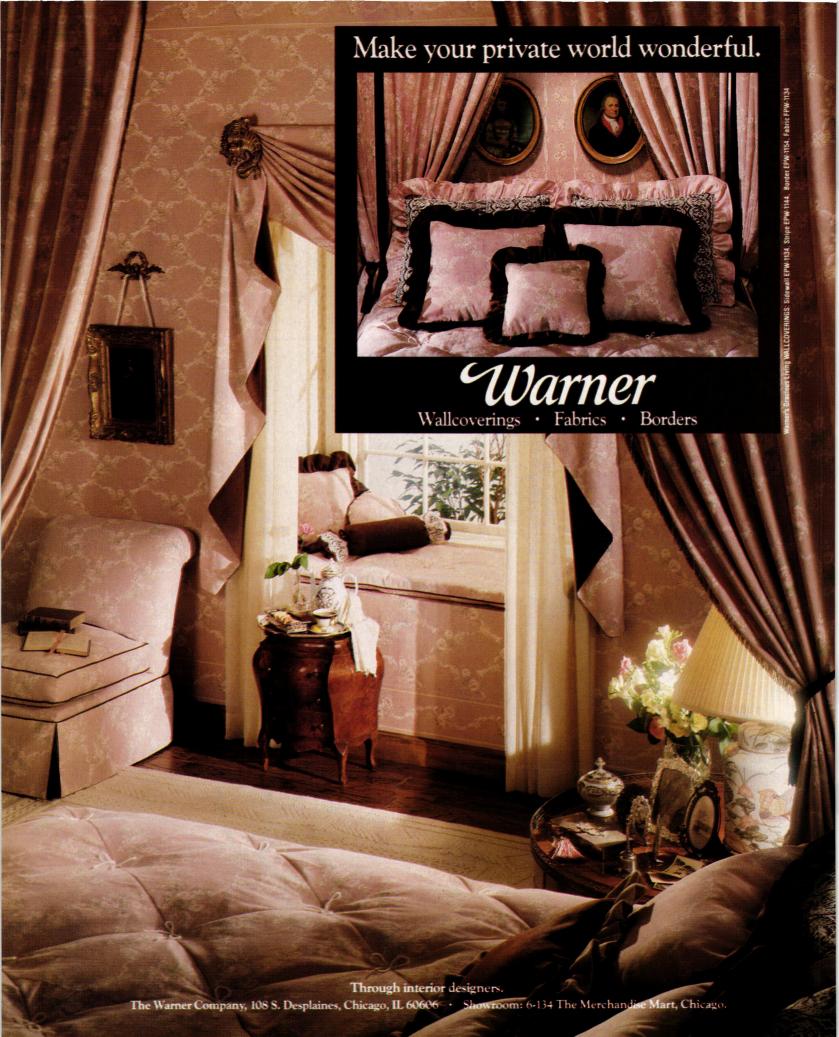


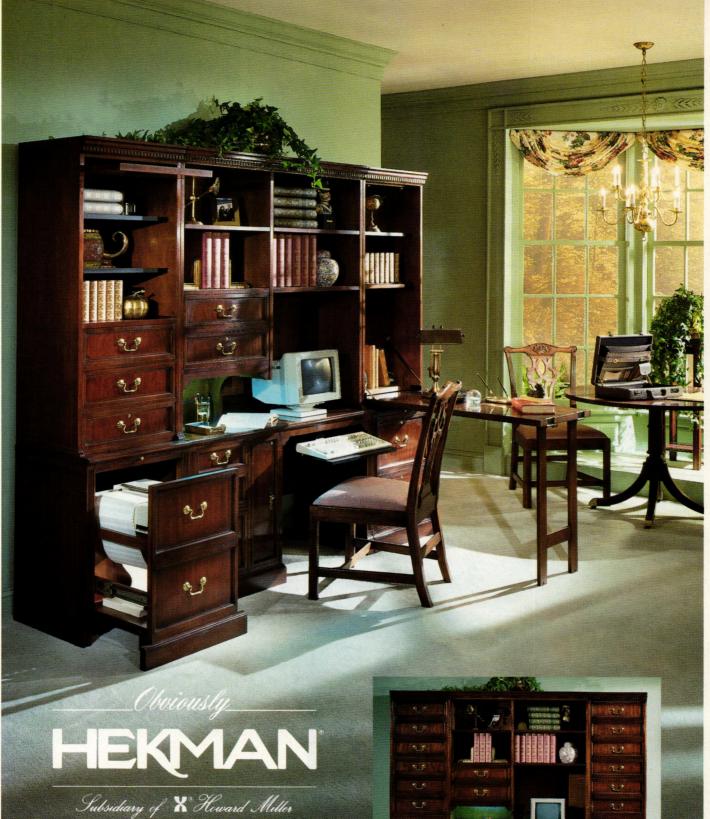
Among the current stars of antiquaire Dino Franzin's tangerine-walled Milan gallery is a gold lacquer Regency daybed.

dinner party that has been called Andy Warhol's Last Supper. On January 22, 1987, exactly one month before the artist's sudden death, Warhol was in Milan for the opening of the final exhibition of his work held during his lifetime: a series based on Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper and shown in a gallery across the street from the Renaissance original. The post-premiere party was vintage Franzin, with a stellar but highly eclectic guest list that mixed art world heavyweights, dolce vita glitterati, and a sprinkling of presentable press.

Though in the business for almost thirty years, Franzin found the past decade to be exceptionally successful, not least because his particular brand of opulent taste found a wider audience than ever before. The Italian upper class has never been shy about showing off its wealth and social position to its peers, and the interiors of their houses are calculated to make the most magnificent impression possible, an idea that gained greater currency in the U.S. during the eighties. Although the trend toward interiors of almost suffocating splendor seems to have crested in this country, there will still be a demand for the irreplaceable object of spectacular singularity, and Dino Franzin is certain to have it in store.







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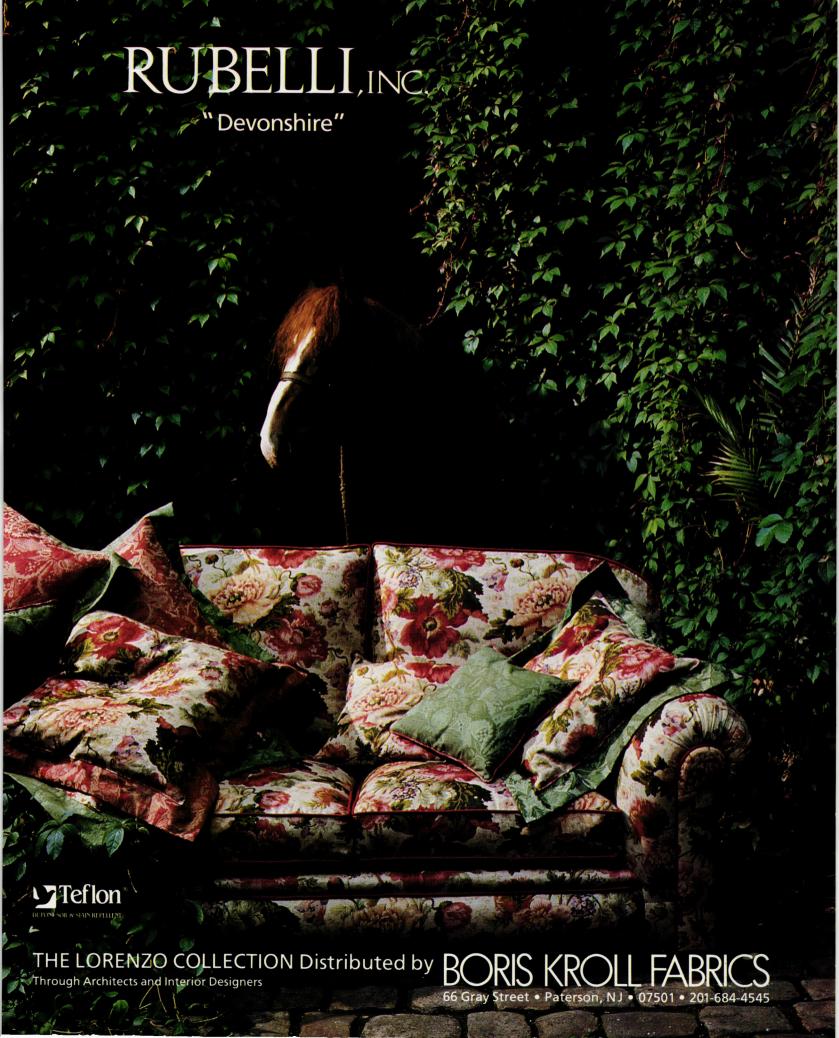


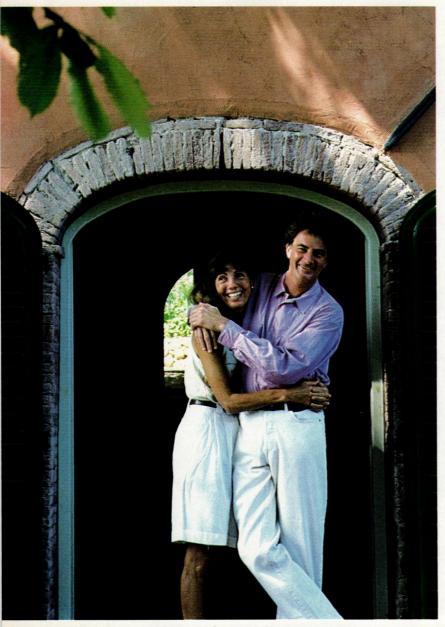
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Mr. Smith Goes to Italy

British menswear designer

Paul Smith loosens his tie in a

Tuscan farmhouse

By Charles Gandee

ontrary to what you may have heard, real men do wear purple socks with their gray flannel suits—as well as brocade vests with their dinner jackets, flowered shirts with their linen trousers, and polka-dot boxer shorts with anything they please. Or at least they do if they're dressed by Paul Smith, the British menswear designer who refuses to choose, when it comes to the question of stylistic inspiration, between Alistair Cooke and Oscar Wilde, between Savile Row and Carnaby Street, between the Eton schoolboy and the East End bad boy.

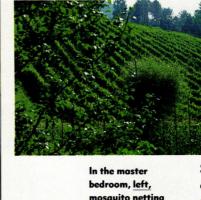
To some, Smith's signature mix of the quiet and the traditional with the flamboyant and the hip is a bit, shall we say, idiosyncratic. To others, of course, the marriage of discreet haberdasher and squawking peacock is precisely the reason why over the past two decades the

designer has parlayed a tiny boutique in his hometown of Nottingham into a \$60 million per year empire that spans twenty countries and includes 47 emporiums in Great Britain, the United States, and Japan.

Keeping tabs on his worldwide operation keeps

Smith on the road and in the air seven out of every twelve months. There are tailors to direct in Milan, fashion shows to orchestrate in Paris, cashmere sweaters to weave in Scotland, and forty shops to monitor in Japan. But when July rolls around, the 43-year-old designer escapes, like generations of Englishmen

Each summer, British menswear designer **Paul Smith and art** student Pauline Denyer, left, escape their 1830 Georgian house in London's **West End for what** they like to call "almost a villa," twenty minutes from Lucca. The modest 100-year-old farmhouse is surrounded by vineyards, below, which is what recommended it to Smith and Denver, who are "afraid of



In the master bedroom, <u>left</u>, mosquito netting envelopes a handmade bed from Scotland.





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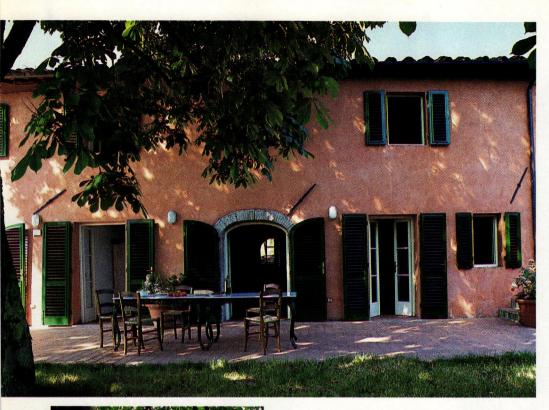
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before him, to Tuscany, where a modest house he calls "almost a villa" awaits.

Smith bought his humble retreat, twenty minutes from Lucca, three years ago because "I can't relax," because there are no tourists in the area, and because the house is located in a valley on twelve acres of open land surrounded by vineyards rather than enveloped by forests. "For people who have never lived in the country," he explains, "it can be worrying-it's dark at night and it's quiet, very very quiet." Although the 100year-old stone and tile structure had sufficient charm to seduce the designer and his longtime companion, Pauline Denyer, twenty years of neglect had taken their toll. The house was a shambleswithout plumbing, without electricity, and without a complete roof.

Judging by Smith's sartorial snap, it would be fair to deduce that his domestic accommodations would be riddled

"As you get more worldly or as you get a bit older your ideas change. I still adore modern things, but more to look at than to live with"



Although Smith and Denyer were committed to maintaining the character of their Tuscan retreat, top, they did add a new coat of terra-cotta-colored stucco and new green shutters to the exterior.

Above: The designer on his swing.



A white wicker chair with a Manuel Canovas fabric cushion greets visitors in the entry. Details see Resources.

with the same kinds of mixed aesthetic signals that have made him rich and famous. But it would be wrong. His Italian home-away-from-home, now fully restored, looks as if the owner were a farmer whose idea of a complete ward-robe is a pair of overalls. In other words, there's not a purple sock in the place.

"I live such a mad mad life," explains Smith, "that when I get home I just want to get into a comfortable sofa. I suppose that as you get more worldly or as you get a bit older your ideas change. I adore modern things, but more to look at than to live with. They really aren't very comfortable." So instead of modern, Smith and Denyer opted for simple rural charm. Although extensive reconstruction efforts were made-including new tile floors, new beamed ceilings, and a new coat of stucco-the goal was "to take it back to the way it might have been." Says Smith: "It's got a nice feeling about it. It makes you quite sleepy." A

Editor: Amicia de Moubray

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What's so great about Italian design?

A roster of experts tell critic JANET ABRAMS what they adore and abhor

Mendini's 1985 Macaone table. above, for Zanotta. Right: Aldo Rossi's recently completed Palazzo Regionale in Perugia's new civic center. Below: Paolo Deganello's 1982 Torso chair

for Cassina. Details

see Resources.

Since the 1960s when the Italians began performing miracles with molded plastic, their masterpieces of form, function, and brio have been shaping the course of contemporary design. From Ettore

Sottsass's fiery 1969 Olivetti typewriter to Gaetano Pesce's tactile 1987 Feltri chairs, Italy has roused the rest of the world with its workmanship and unfettered imagination. Now after nearly three decades does Italy still deserve its

laurels? And are further accolades vet to come?

PAUL GOLDBERGER, architecture critic, The New York Times. Nobody else has managed to merge spareness and sensuality as well as the Italians. Their work isn't overly ornamented or cluttered. The Germans are often more hard-edged, the Japanese more razzle-dazzle. But there's no excess in Italian design.

You want to touch it and feel it and caress it. One of my favorite examples is Mario Bellini's wonderful Olivetti desk calculator with the nipples-it's no long-

> er in production, but I recently saw it again at the Design Museum in London. It carries the natural qualities of Italian de-



sign to the point of exaggeration. Too bad it was rendered obsolete by the advent of the microchip.

LELLA VIGNELLI, president, Vignelli Design, New York City. Italian design is a national phenomenon, not an isolated factor. It really is understood by an enormous percentage of the population—I'm tempted to say the whole population. And it's appreciated and communicated by all the publications, from newspapers to popular magazines. It's almost like soccersomething that everyone participates in and has pride in at different levels, whether at the very high and expensive end or at Italy's equivalent of Woolworth's.

ROBERT A. M. STERN, principal, Robert A. M. Stern Architects, New York City. The truth is that with the exception of Mem-

> phis I haven't found Italian design interesting for ten years or more. Emilio Ambasz put the lid on its coffin in 1972 at MOMA in his exhibition "Italy: The New Domestic Landscape." That was the end of it for me. It became repetitious, too involved in new technologies. The shapes were boring. They went one way and I went another. But in the sixties and early seventies the Italians' use of hard and expandable plastics was new and fresh compared with the then-limited forms of high Modernism-a dull diet of glass and chrome. Italian design opened wider possibilities. It was seductive, evocative, soft and hard. The white was white and the color fan-

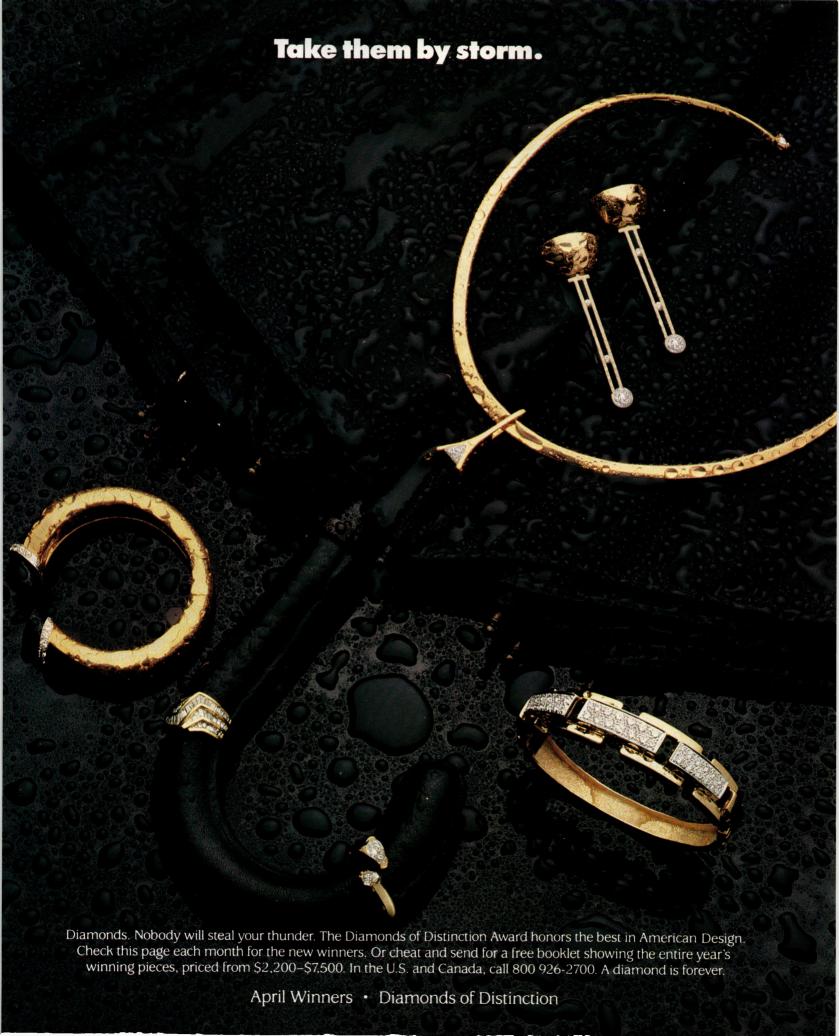
tastic. I moved on. Maybe they didn't.

R. CRAIG MILLER, associate curator of twentieth-century design and architecture, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. What gives Italian design an edge is its fabrication: the choice of material, quality of detailing, how the leg joins to the seat, how the fabric is attached. Italian technical innovations—like finding new methods of molding plastic-have radically changed our perceptions of what a chair or table might be. Modernism may have become a little threadbare, but Italy's Postmodernists are still very vital, and there's even a second generation emerging.

NIGEL COATES, partner, Branson Coates Architecture, London. The Italians are elegant perfectionist masters of the industri-



Richard Sapper's 1972 Tizio lamp, above, for Artemide. Right: Ettore Sottsass's 1969 Valentine typewriter for Olivetti.



Aldo Rossi's 1987
Momento stainlesssteel wristwatch and
pocket watch bezel,

DESIGN

Gaetano Pesce's 1987 Feltri chairs, right, for Cassina.

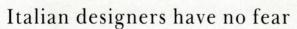
steel wristwatch and pocket watch bezel, above, for Alessi. Below right:
Nathalie du Pasquier's 1983 Royal sofa for Memphis Milano. Below: The sofa component of Antonio Citterio's 1986 Sity sectional line for B&B Italia.

al process. In the sixties Milan sucked in talent from Rome, Florence, Naples, and it had a structure—with the Milan Furniture Fair and a world-dominant design press—equipped to turn ideas into objects with great conviction. The outcome was a great number of chairs and other furniture that have become design icons. The fault with many of the pieces by Memphis and Studio Alchymia, for example, is that they were often designed to be looked at rather than used. Not that they weren't wonderful in the way they carried ideas in a pure

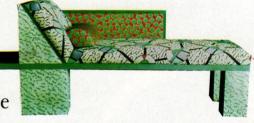


else about their lives. The manufacturers in Italy are much more open and interested in new ideas than those in other countries, and new designs are promoted well. Look at companies like Olivetti, always innovative in terms of its product design and also its workplaces. But this is something that appears and disappears. It all depends on leadership.

MICHAEL GRAVES, principal, Michael Graves Architect, Princeton. I've never known what all the hoopla was about. It's not that I dislike Italian design, but I've always found it a bit too self-conscious. If you're talking about Italian clothes, though, that's another story. The cars, too, have been terrific. I'm especially thinking about old Lancias and Maseratis—you can't help feeling you're in the lap of luxury with all that handsewn leather. I've designed 25 pieces for Alessi—my tea set keeps hatching new elements. Alberto Alessi has the quality



because they have been brought up from the



day they are born thinking that design is what matters

form, but they presented the viewer with a fait accompli.

Italian design today is moving away from the arrogant object—so monumental in the way it presents itself that

umental in the way it presents itself that it doesn't allow the viewer a way in. My own work and the work of many of my contemporaries is more closely connect-

ed with earlier designers like Carlo Mollino who took the body as a paradigm and tried to make furniture that was communicative and sensuous.

RICHARD MEIER, principal, Richard Meier & Partners, New York City. There are a lot of talented, capable people in Italy, like Mario Bellini, Ettore Sottsass, Vittorio Gregotti, and Aldo Rossi. They have a different attitude, which probably has to do with where they live and what they eat and everything

down pat: he does metal, plastic, and rubber perfectly. You get spoiled working for him because he has his hand not only in the packaging but also in the advertising. Alberto Alessi is like Disney chairman Michael Eisner. He's inventive and he cares, but he also gets to play with all the toys.

FRANK GEHRY, president, Frank O. Gehry & Associates, Santa Monica. I've always felt Italians have the greatest sense of humor. They have a zest for life and it's reflected in their design. The French and the Swiss get a little too serious, though not Philippe Starck—he's Italian in a sense. In the seventies Ettore Sottsass's work had a childlike wonder to it. Another person I admired was Mario Bellini—the way he fit leather over a metal frame and stitched it together to make a chair. These days I like Gaetano Pesce's crumpled couches, the ones that look like Shar-Pei dogs.

EVA JIRICNA, principal, Eva Jiricna Architects, London. You can recognize Italian design from miles away. It's an absolutely straightforward statement. They have no problem with detailing—they do the research, and the craftsmen execute the work absolutely perfectly. Italian designers dare to make outrageous, courageous statements. They have no fear because they have been brought up from the day they are born thinking that design is what matters.







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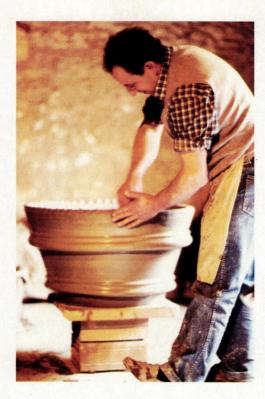
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Fine Italian Hands

Six Tuscan craftsmen carry on centuries-old traditions

BY CHRISTOPHER PETKANAS

It is said that the only thing the distinguished artisans of Tuscany and its hub, Florence, cannot make to order is disappointment. History, integrity, and technique are built into the region's traditional

crafts like a guarantee. The variety of crafts themselves is eye-opening—from terra-cotta floor tiles promised to last three centuries to plain or fancy hand-carved picture frames; from night tables painted with chinoiserie to scagliola tabletops that trick the eye into thinking

their surface decoration is marble. Tuscany is home to a wealth of workshops, and six of the finest discussed here—artisans adept at furniture restoration, terra-cotta production, the art of scagliola, frame making, fabric weaving, and silversmithing—are well worth the trip.

PAINTED FURNITURE Since the end of the last century, the Ponzianis of Florence have been identified with the soulful restoration of antique painted furniture, whether gilded or lacquered, Venetian or Louis XIV. Since the late 1940s the



Ponzianis have also been crafting historically correct state-ofthe-art copies of these same pieces as a less expensive alternative. Today the pocket-size firm, located in a ravishing Renaissance palazzo in the woodworking quarter of Florence, is run by Maurizio Ponziani, the son of the founder, who employs a team of six artisans. Tables, chairs, desks, cabinets, chests of drawers, and more are all made to order, handcrafted, and hand-painted.

People who own replicas of the duchess of Windsor's jewels may want to consider a Ponziani reproduction of her black japanned Queen Anne bureau bookcase. Their facsimile of a seventeenth-century Spanish pharmacist's cupboard is equipped with dozens of minuscule drawers—some real, some false—that are meant to store herbs, but they would be

just as good for separating tagliolini from tagliatelle in the kitchen. Ponziani doesn't guarantee that your prose will improve by working at their Louis XVI—style writing table, its drawers and legs lavished with swags and garlands, but it seems likely. Some of the company's copies are so good they have been mistaken for period originals and sold as such by international auction houses. Maurizio is shocked they don't know better. A full eighty percent of Ponziani's business in reproductions is derived from the United States. Typically an American client will come into the shop

Mario Mariani, above left, shapes a terracotta pot destined to hold a lemon tree. Above: From Bianco Bianchi, an elaborate scagliola tabletop. Left: A dining chair highlighted in gilt from Ponziani. Below left: Framer Piero Franceschi in his Santo Spirito workshop. Below: Lisio's handwoven silk with a motif taken from Botticelli's Primavera.





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Ponziani doesn't guarantee your prose will improve by working at their Louis XVI-style writing table, but it seems likely

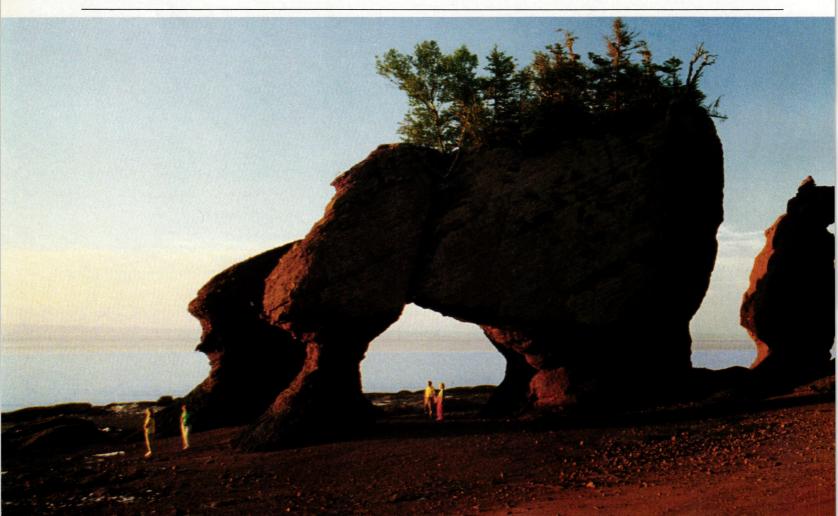
with a copy of Florence de Dampierre's The Best of Painted Furniture, turn to a page, and say, "I would like that." And they are thrilled when Maurizio Ponziani is able to give it to them, line for line. (Ponziani/Lo Studiolo, Via Santo Spirito 27, 50125 Florence; 55-287958) TERRA-COTTA Like vineyards and olive groves, terra-cotta tiles, flowerpots, and garden statues are crucial to the Tuscan landscape. The finest and most durable in Italy, and some authorities would say the world, is from Impruneta, a once-important market town off the old road to Siena six miles south of Florence. The Etruscans who settled Impruneta learned to make terra-cotta from the Greeks around the fifth century B.C. The Romans also later produced it, but their technique never matched



One of Bianco Bianchi's tabletops in progress. The floral design is incised in marble and filled with a colored gypsum mixture called scagliola.

that of their predecessors'. It wasn't until Renaissance artists such as Donatello and Verrocchio started working in it that terra-cotta became a popular alternative to stone or marble. Brunelleschi handpicked Impruneta tiles that cap his duomo in Florence, and Della Robbia contributed terra-cotta decorations to the arches of Brunelleschi's Foundling Hospital on the Piazza Santissima Annunziata. Today nearly half of all Italian "baked earth" comes from the kilns of Impruneta.

Although there are much older factories in the town, few operate on the same level as that of Mario Mariani, whose grandfather founded the business in 1914. Mariani's entire output is formed by hand and fired in a woodburning kiln. Like every craftsman in



Impruneta, the reason he is there in the first place is the exceptionally smooth local gray clay. Because it absorbs much less moisture after firing than terra-cotta made with other inferior clays, it resists low winter temperatures that lead to cracking. The high iron and aluminum content of the raw material also contributes to strength and longevity.

Since chunky floor tiles one and a half inch thick and widemouthed containers for lemon trees obtain their first characteristically pink coloring from the oxidation of iron in the clay during firing, the quality of that heat is critical. Many of Mariani's contemporaries use easily operated methane gas ovens that produce a flat, crude, unvarying shade of orange considered hopelessly vulgar by terracotta aficionados. He and his clients prefer the subtle and unpredictable gradations that result from a wood fire.

Everything made by this good-natured artisan, including orcios designed to store olive oil and now used as garden decorations, follows the designs of his grandfather. Nonno Mariani left behind

sketches and jottings that fill a notebook which Mario refers to as "my computer." (Mario Mariani, Via di Cappello 29, 50023 Impruneta; 55-201-1950)

SCAGLIOLA Dismissed as a minor art when it was introduced in Italy in the sixteenth century, scagliola has no pedi-

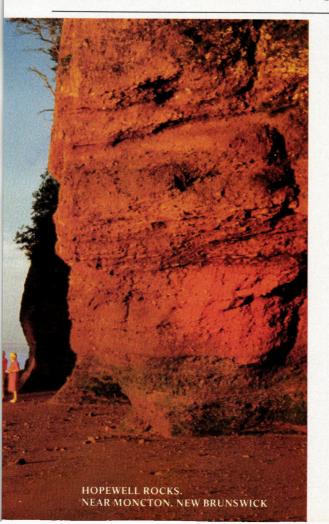


At painted furniture specialists Ponziani, a desk drawer is embellished with a carefully brushed still life of fruit.

gree problem today. A marblelike mixture of ground gypsum, pigment, and glue employed as filler in designs incised in marble or slate, scagliola is collected by English nobility (the duke of Kent for his apartments in Kensington Palace) and fashion nobility (Gianni Versace for his Lake Como villa).

Both men's blue-chip resource for one-of-a-kind furniture incorporating the painstaking trompe l'oeil art of scagliola is Bianco Bianchi, who was an office worker and a moonlighting artisan until an American department store promotion in the late sixties generated enough business for him to devote himself to his craft full-time. He makes tables, small decorative boxes, as well as picture designs for hanging on the wall just as one would a painting, and he is pleased to carve them with any image a client suggests. Versace favors Neoclassical motifs: one of the eighteen tables he commissioned shows shapely amphoras; the angry head of Medusa crops up in another. The duke of Kent opted for his own coat of arms—a crown framed by a lion and a unicorn.

The gypsum used in scagliola is mined in the Apennines, a mountain chain that forms the boundary between Tuscany and Romagna. Dissolved in glue, it fills







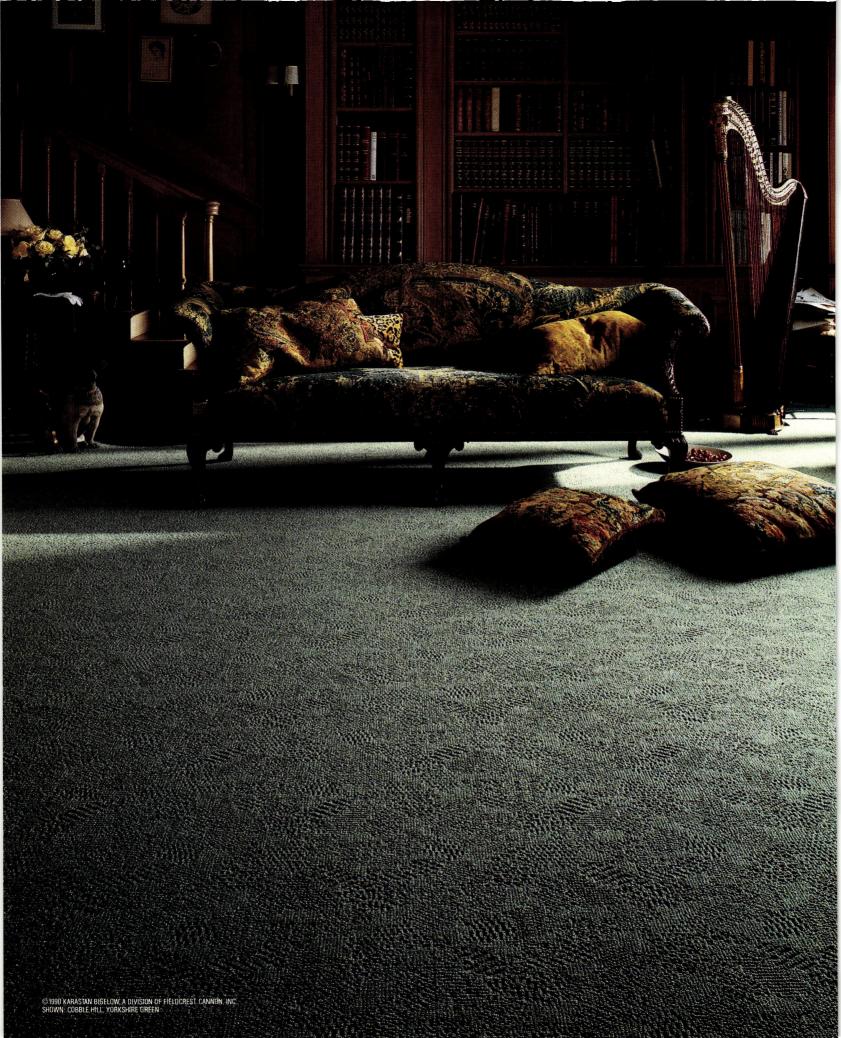
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the design incised to a depth of about an eighth of an inch. Drying time is fifteen days, after which the surface is smoothed first with a razor, then a wet pumice stone. For complex realistic motifs such as birds and flowers, the process begins all over again with the carving and inlaying of the scagliola itself. (Le Scagliole di Bianco Bianchi e Figli, Viale Europa 117, 50125 Florence; 55-686118)

FRAMES "The artisan is an anachronism. He's the bicycle of today," says Piero Franceschi from behind his craftsman's curtain of brown curls. The fore-

says he had learned the names of virtually all the tools he uses by the time he was seven. Early apprenticeships taught him that the artists whose paintings and drawings he would be hired to frame shouldn't influence him. "What interests me is the rapport between the work and the frame I am making. It makes no difference to me if the painter is Picasso or someone completely unknown." (Franceschi, Via Toscanella 28–38R, 50125 Florence; 55-284704)

TEXTILES If eight hours seems a ridiculously long time to produce a $3\frac{1}{2}$ -by-23-inch morsel of jacquard fabric, think

of the three months that go into programming the thousands of perforated cards that set the turn-of-the-century pine handlooms in motion. As in 1906 when Giuseppe Lisio founded his name-sake company, such is the time-consuming reality today of making what are surely the world's most extravagant, most elaborate, and most expensive damasks, figured silks, brocades, and chiseled velvets.

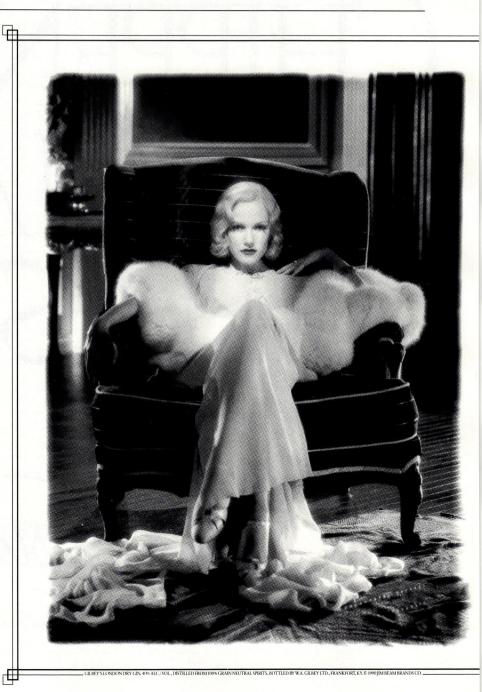
The Florentine firm employs just two full-time and two part-time weavers, and for their patient trouble and good strong legs (necessary to animate the

In his workshop, Piero Franceschi makes frames that look as if they've been dipped in gold

most framer in Florence perceives himself as a kind of chronological error, but business could hardly be described as flat. There are always so many frames waiting to be picked up or delivered in his fifteenth-century Santo Spirito workshop and boutique, the 1940s atelier of realist painter Ottone Rosai, that people are often fooled into thinking there is actually something to buy. In fact, everything is made to order and chosen from a repertoire that includes lavishly ornamented Baroque or severely rectilinear Art Deco designs, Empire frames that look as if they have been dipped in gold, and simple fluted and marbleized frames that Franceschi has come to regard as his signature classics.

Franceschi works in all woods, including raw, splintery cast-off pieces he salvages from building sites and then insets, typically, with lozenges of colored resin. "I learn a lot by studying windows and doors, both of which are kinds of frames," he says. "If you look at them this way, man has been making frames for six thousand years."

The son of a brass smith and the grandson of a hat trimmer, Franceschi



looms and achieve the proper tension in the cloth), only orders of sixty meters or less are accepted. Old Italian nobility make up the core of the tiny audience for Lisio's handwoven textiles, many of which are based on tapestries and on garments in paintings by Botticelli, Ghirlandaio, Perugino, and Veronese. Others are taken from fabrics charged with historical meaning. Imperatore is a copy of a Byzantine cloth discovered in the sarcophagus of a bishop in Bamberg. Woven in Constantinople in the emperor's atelier, which catered exclusively to the court, it shows a figure on

horseback that may be Constantine himself returning victorious from war. Dalmatica, another typically ornate design, is borrowed from the chasuble that is said to have belonged to Charlemagne. This silk shows Christ on an ash-blue ground with a procession of kings, patriarchs, monks, nuns, angels, and bishops.

In collaboration with Venetian textile manufacturer Lorenzo Rubelli, Lisio also offers a second collection that is produced on power looms yet looks almost as rich and luxurious as its laborintensive counterparts. Designed to coordinate with the handwovens, these

less expensive versions are stocked in Rubelli's own shops with branches located throughout Italy. But it is the handwovens that young men who are entering the priesthood and need proper vestments insist on. "They adore beautiful fabric," says Roberta Landini, who directs Lisio's weaving school. "Italian priests are very concerned about how they look." (Lisio Fondazione Arte della Seta, Via Benedetto Fortini 143, 50125 Florence; 55-680-1340)

SILVER In a tiny Florentine carriage house crowned by a vaulted ceiling, Paolo Pagliai and his trio of assistants

The dress was chiffon, the stockings were silk, and a martini was the height of fashion.

There's never been a time when fashion was invisible. Yet never a time was it so obvious as the 1920's. In fact, to the elegant Parisian or New Yorker fashion was considered vital.

These were the early days of great designers who still influence the fashion industry today. Their bold interpretations of the art deco style set the world on fire. New color, new material all brought out new looks. Looks that changed as quickly as the weather.

Perhaps it was a reaction to the drab gray of war. To the sacrifice.
The sorrow. Whatever the reason, it seemed everyone was intent on outshining their friends and acquaintances.

But whether or not a dress was a designer original was just part of the story. Everything that was "in fashion" became part of one's own personal style. Viewing the latest portrait from Tamara de Lempicka, driving your Bugatti out on Long Island or listening to jazz on a gramophone were all fashion statements unto themselves.

Even ordering the right cocktail was part of fashion. And in the 1920's nothing was more fashionable than the martini. Today fashion is just as obvious. And though the times may call for a Patrick Kelly instead of a Paul Poiret, the martini is still made the same way.

Gilbey's. Good taste

never goes out of style.

Three months go into programming the perforated cards that set Lisio's looms in motion

work miracles on silver in need of repair or replacement. When all of Florence was gearing up for Countess Fiametta Frescobaldi's 1988 wedding, Pagliai was called upon to add new shine to Santo Spirito's towering silver chandeliers the very ones the Frescobaldis had donated to the cathedral two hundred years earlier. Heirloom teapots with faulty spouts and eighteenth-century flatware services requiring a few more forks are also standard fare for Pagliai, who learned his craft working alongside his father, Orlando. Equally adept at quality reproduction, Pagliai eschews mass-production techniques and still casts his pieces in one-shot molds handmade from octopus cartilage. He stocks the few display cases in his studio with extraordinarily convincing replicas of eighteenth-century Florentine trays, saltcellars, vegetable dishes, and charming ornamental shells of his own design. And though his client roster reads like a who's who of Florentine nobility, Pagliai remains the consummate humble artisan. "My work," he shrugs. "It's useful." (Paolo Pagliai, Borgo San Jacopo 41R, 50125 Florence; 55-282840). ▲

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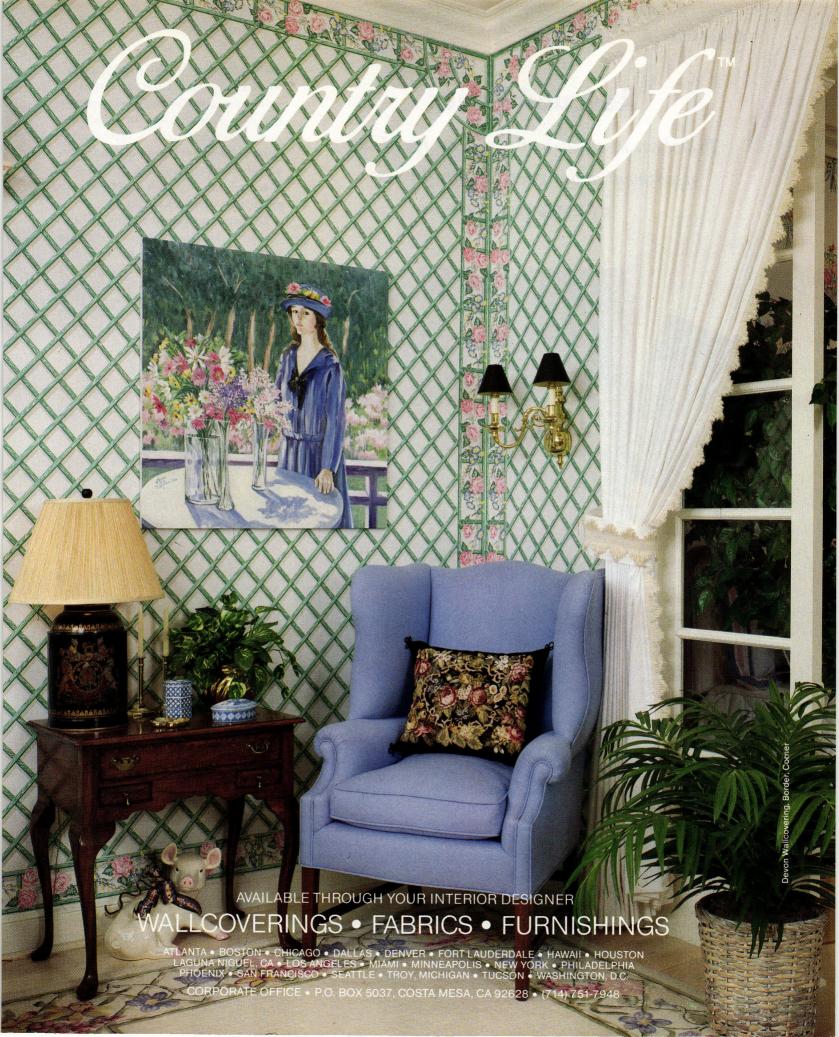
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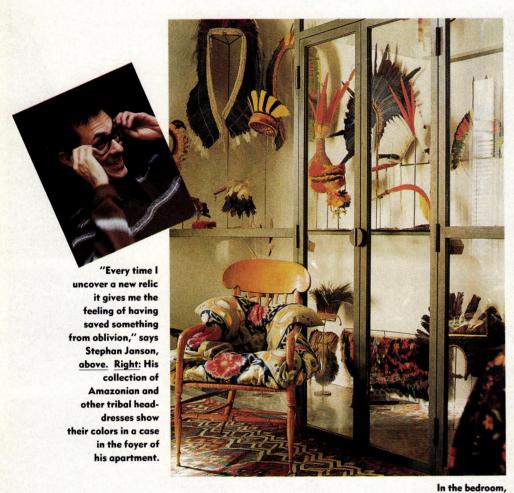
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Rescued Relics

Tribal art meets cartoon classic in the Milan apartment of designer Stephan Janson

By UMBERTO PASTI



ecoration is an irritating word," says 33-year-old French fashion designer Stephan Janson. "To furnish a house by adopting a style or following a plan is like dressing according to fashion. I believe in freedom."

This everything-goes stance is best exemplified by Janson's Milan apartment, which has been his home base for the past seven years. In each of the five rooms there isn't a piece of furniture, an object, or a fabric that is in harmony by period or style with the thing next to it. The master bedroom, for instance, features a carpet festooned with Disney characters, an eccentric 1940s neo-Baroque armchair by architect Emilio Terry, a late eighteenth century Neapolitan bed, and a Victorian iron table in the form of intertwined roots. Meanwhile,

above right, a 1940s armchair by architect Emilio Terry, a rustic Victorian iron table, a late 18th century Neapolitan bed, and a 1950s Walt Disney carpet form an inspired ensemble. Right: An Italian Neoclassical console supports a Roman head of Venus and a fragmentary Parian marble horse, both 2nd century B.C.

the focal point of the dining room, which also serves as library and studio, is an Empire table cloaked in silk-embroidered Turkish cloth and surrounded by French iron garden chairs. Here the carpet is a kilim from Bessarabia, the painted light fixture is Russian, and the desk is Italian Art Nouveau—and yet it all emanates a curious harmony.

Of his passion for the overlooked and slightly arcane Janson explains, "I have always collected objects that were un-

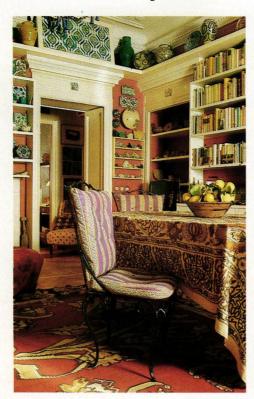




derappreciated. It's not an investment for me; it's a compulsion. Every time I uncover a new relic, it gives me the feeling of having saved something from oblivion, of redeeming a small piece of history." Thanks to Janson's highly successful rescue efforts, his apartment has gradually been transformed into a haven for rare and precious artifacts. Tribal headdresses from the Amazon, the



There isn't a piece of furniture, an object, or a fabric of the same period or



Philippines, the plateaus of Cameroon, and New Guinea display their vibrant feathers and beadwork in a tall glass showcase at the entrance foyer. Islamic ceramics dating from the ninth to the eighteenth centuries, with brilliantly colored enamelwork and sumptuous glazing, rest on the bookcases in the dining room, and Roman and Byzantine sculptural and architectural marble

In the dining room, which doubles as a library and studio, a French iron garden chair is paired with an Empire table cloaked in 18th-century silk-embroidered Turkish cloth. Parts of an extensive collection of Islamic ceramics, dating from the 9th to the 18th centuries, pattern the walls.

fragments form still lifes on low tables and consoles in the living room.

"The Indians of the Amazon, the Arabs, and the ancient Romans have been my three passions since I was young," says Janson. "Prowling in a Paris junk shop when I was twelve years old,

I found a remarkable Amazonian headdress of the sort adolescent males of the Karajo tribe used in their initiation rites. The dealer couldn't believe I was interested. It was an old carnival hat, he said, and promptly sold it to me for the equivalent of a couple of dollars. As far as I know, the only other existing headdress similar to mine is at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris."

Janson belies his fragile looks with tales of his adventures among the wily antiques dealers of Cairo, Damascus, eastern Turkey, and north Syria. His search for Ottoman tiles and other ceramics salvaged from mosques and palaces has taken him through a maze of tiny outpost towns where he honed his talent for negotiating with sign language and rarely left empty-handed. "About fifteen years ago there wasn't a lot of interest in Islamic art. Entire buildings were torn down, and the ce-

ORREFORS. HUMBLED ONLY BY THE TEMPTATION



style as the thing next to it—yet every room

ramics that lined their walls were easily found on the market. The same thing is happening today with ancient marble. There are warehouses in Italy loaded with architectural fragments dating back to the Roman Empire. In the workrooms of tombstone carvers you can actually find bricks made of porphyry or serpentine, and cornices made of that pavonazzetto marble from Asia Minor which, legend has it, was stained by the blood of Actaeon."

I ask him how he finds the time to design two Italian collections every year as well as another two for Micalady (a Japanese clothing company) and also devote inordinate hours to browsing the world's antiques shops and flea markets, to corresponding with dozens of bookstores, to frequenting museums, to reading and studying. He looks at me surprised, as if the answer is obvious. "It's all about the same search. The way colors

are used on a feather cloak from Central America or on a thirteenth-century Persian goblet can help me create a room or design a dress."

And after a brief pause, punctuated by an ascetic Oriental smile that conceals his absolute determination, he adds, "Just as I don't believe in good taste, I don't believe in styles. To me there is just one style, and it crops up everywhere. The anonymous Roman stonecutter who carved a frieze had it and so did the Turkish craftsman who painted a dish for his master. Style is a search for greater freedom. You don't need money or culture—just a bit of courage and a lot of passion."



On a trio of shelves, brilliantly glazed Isnik ceramic tiles, right, from the 16th and 17th centuries join 18th-century cups and saucers from Kütahya in Turkey.

Above: Tree-shaped coral and a Roman marble bust, 2nd century B.C., surround a contemporary shell frame made by a child in Tangier.

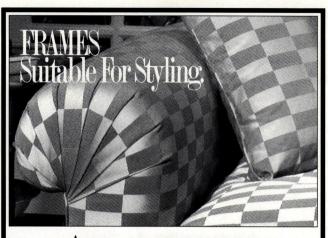
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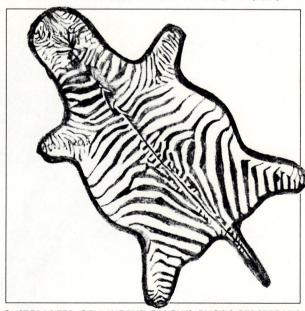


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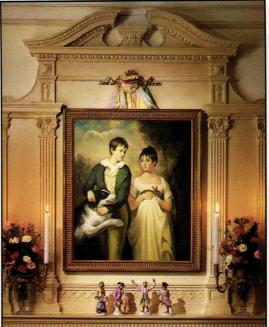
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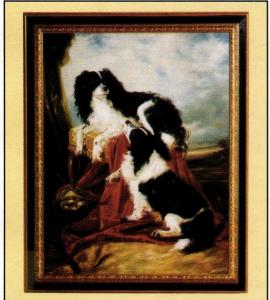


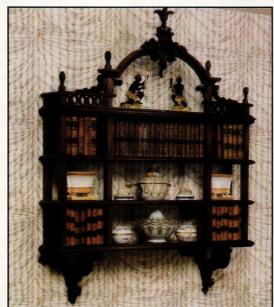
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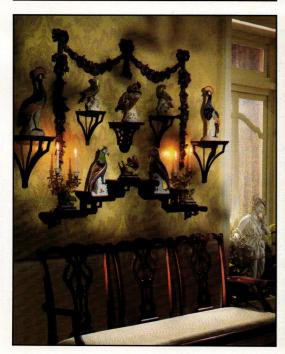
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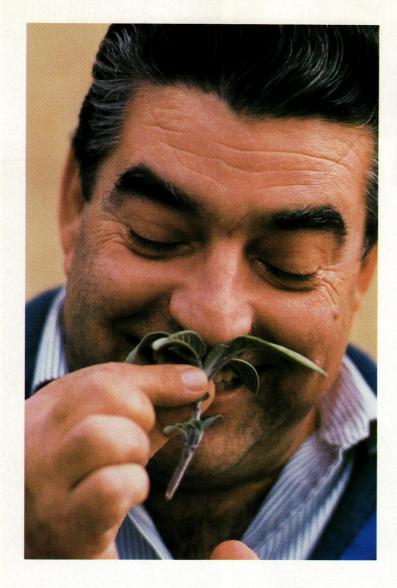
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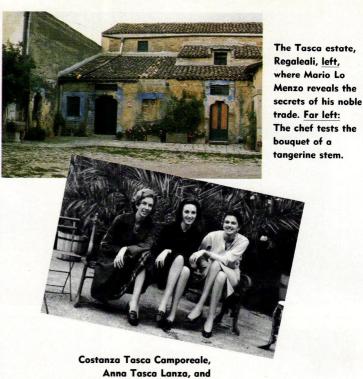
The Last of the Monzù

Mario Lo Menzo upholds a vanishing tradition of Sicilian family chefs

By Mary Taylor Simeti

magine the desperate poverty of postwar Sicily—it is 1954—and a young lad, fresh from the provinces, being conducted along a palm-lined drive on the outskirts of Palermo toward a luxurious garden of swan-filled pools and bougainvillea vines brilliant against a backdrop of magnolias and tall cedars. Behind the garden rises the severe façade of Villa Tasca, pale brown stone decorated with an elaborate escutcheon of carved marble.

Mario Lo Menzo was eighteen then, a Sicilian version of Dick Whittington in search of fame and fortune. With four



years' experience as a kitchen boy, a remarkable talent with food, and most probably a certain dose of trepidation, he was on his way to enter the service of Giuseppe Tasca, Conte d'Almerita, as helper to the count's chef.

Rosemarie Tasca in the 1960s.

Count Tasca was something of an anomaly among Sicilian aristocrats, for together with his lands and his title he had also inherited a pronounced entrepreneurial bent. His forefathers had already turned Regaleali, a large feudal estate in the Sicilian interior they had acquired in the 1830s, into a model farm for livestock and grain production; he himself was soon to begin bottling and marketing the estate's wines—heretofore produced only for local consumption—with such success that today Regaleali wine is sold internationally.

Young Mario may have been awed by his first meeting with the count, but he was probably downright terrified by his first encounter with the king of the kitchen. Chef Giovanni Messina, who had been serving the Tascas for forty years, was familiarly known as Giovannino, an unlikely nickname for a bad-tempered autocrat who was extremely jealous of his secrets and his prerogatives and very much aware that he too was heir to a glorious title, that of monzù.

The first monzù had come to southern Italy with Napoleon's army as chef to Joaquin Murat. When his boss lost the crown at the Congress of Vienna, Monsieur Robert went home, leaving behind him a taste for French cuisine and the title of monsieur, which in Neapolitan dialect soon became monzù. From the Bourbon court at Naples the fashion for French cooking spread rapidly to aristocratic households throughout the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. The early monzù, Frenchmen imported at great expense, were succeeded by Neapolitans and Sicilians who had trained in

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Tangerines transformed: panierini al mandarino

the great kitchens of Paris. A well-paid elite, they owed their title less to their training than to their employers—the monzù served only the aristocratic families and never fraternized with the chefs of the bourgeoisie—and to their art. In their hands the ancient tradition of Sicilian baronial cuisine reached new heights of sumptuousness.

It was during the Belle Époque, a period of lavish entertaining, that the monzù Giovannino served his apprenticeship, working his way around the aristocratic kitchens of Palermo and learning each master's specialty, from soups to ices, sauces to pastries. The art of making consommé could be acquired under Giuseppe, chef to Baron Lo Monaco, whereas Enrico, who worked for the duke of Salaparuta, was famous for his ability to transform vegetables for his employer's amusement so that what appeared to be pasta con le vongole turned out to be made with eggplant.

Mario's own apprenticeship lasted nine years. Giovannino, in his eighties by that time, was despotic and loathe to part with any of his secrets. He would tolerate no youthful levity or distraction in the kitchen and demanded that his assistants concentrate totally on the food at hand: the whole body must be present before the stove, he claimed, with all its senses alert. It was harsh training, especially for a jovial youth like Mario, but it produced an heir worthy of the old monzù. The first meal prepared under Mario's command was served to a frequent guest at the Tasca table, Conte Lanza di Mazzarino, the father-in-law of the eldest Tasca daughter. "Ah!" sighed the guest at the end of dinner, "Giovannino is still Giovannino." No mistake ever gave more satisfaction.

Mario has carried on Giovannino's

—but ordinarily Count Tasca wishes to be advised ahead of time of any changes, and only those that meet with his approval become part of the repertoire. One such invention is castrato al Rosso del Conte, a ragout Mario created to celebrate a fine red Regaleali wine. Although on the Tasca estate this dish is made with the meat of young goats, it is perfectly adaptable to mutton or lamb.

Mario's debt to Regaleali goes beyond his ingredients. In an age when few aristocratic families can still afford to employ chefs of his standing, Regaleali and its winery have allowed him to become one of the last true claimants to the title

The first monzù arrived with Napoleon's army —and left behind a taste for French cuisine

traditions, both in the everyday delights of Sicilian cooking and in the exquisite masterpieces created for weddings and other gala Tasca family occasions: pasticcio di selvaggina, a pâté of pheasant and quail, or medaglioni di pollo, round slices of chicken galantine decorated with pâté, aspic, and truffles and served in wide baskets made of pasta woven with fresh flowers dipped in wax. While these require professional skill, even an amateur can master panierini al mandarino, a delicate citrus gelatin served in baskets of tangerine peel. A very old Sicilian dish, this probably originated as a tornagusto, served, as ices often were, between two very rich courses in order to cleanse the palate. Today it makes a pretty and pleasantly refreshing dessert.

Like his predecessor, Mario has the privilege of working with homegrown ingredients. Most of the vegetables, fruit, meat, and dairy products as well as the olive oil, vinegar, and wine that he uses in his cooking are produced at Regaleali, where the Tasca family spends much of its time. The strong Sicilian flavors hold their own even in the face of exotic imports, like the caviar in Mario's version of pasta al caviale.

Despite the strong hold of tradition, Mario has created his own recipes. Occasionally his innovations are fortuitous like all artists he is a great believer in using flair to turn error into advantage of monzù. At the fairs and exhibitions where the Regaleali wines are being promoted, his cooking has acquired an international reputation, and now the lovely old stone buildings of the estate have become the setting in which he can teach others his secrets.

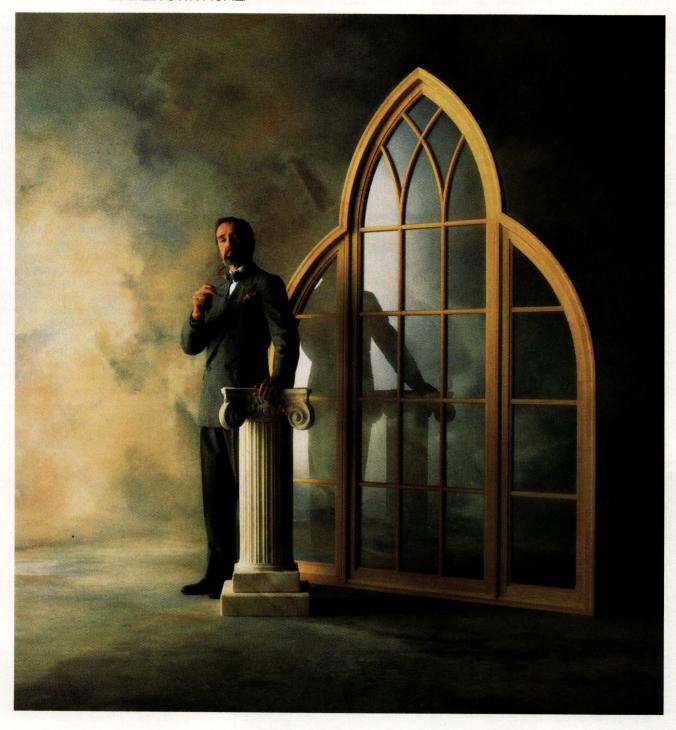
The count's three daughters, who share their father's enterprising spirit as well as his fondness for the old baronial cuisine of Sicily, have recently inaugurated a series of spring and fall cooking courses at Regaleali. While they attend lessons in which Mario demonstrates his skills, small groups of American enthusiasts are guests at the cottages of Anna, Costanza, and Rosemarie Tasca. With the help of yet another generation of Tascas, the glorious traditions of the monzù are gaining a new audience.

PANIERINI AL MANDARINO

- 1 ounce sheet gelatin
- 1 cup warm water
- 2 cups orange juice, freshly squeezed
- 2 cups tangerine juice, freshly squeezed
- 1/2 cup lemon juice, freshly squeezed
- 2 cups water
- 11/2 cups sugar
- 1 dozen tangerines with stems and leaves attached

Soften the sheets of gelatin by soaking them for a few minutes in the water. In a saucepan combine the softened gelatin and its water with the juices, the remaining water, and the sugar (adjust amount of

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sugar according to taste and to the acidity of the oranges). Bring to a boil over low heat beating the mixture continually with a whisk so that the gelatin dissolves. When it comes to a boil, remove from heat and, using a slotted spoon, skim off the foam that has formed on the surface.

Place a chair upside down on a table, place a bowl on the underside of the seat, and tie a dish towel to the legs so that it is suspended over the bowl. Slowly pour the gelatin mixture into the towel so that it will filter through the cloth into the bowl. Cover the bowl and place the liquid in the refrigerator overnight to jell.

With a sharp knife cut an opening on either side of the stem of each tangerine leaving the bottom half intact and a ½-inch strip going over the top so that the peel forms a round basket with a handle. Carefully extract the pulp through the openings. About an hour before serving, remove the gelatin from the refrigerator, stir it lightly, and spoon it into the hollow peels. Serves 12.

PASTA AL CAVIALE

11/2 pounds vermicellini

- % cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup finely chopped onion
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped chives
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped

- 2 ounce jar red lumpfish caviar
- 2 ounce jar black lumpfish caviar Freshly ground black pepper

Cook the pasta in boiling salted water until al dente. Drain, reserving a half cup of the water, and place in a serving bowl.

While pasta is cooking, heat the oil in a skillet over a low flame and sauté the onion until softened but not colored. Remove from the heat and immediately add the parsley, chives, garlic, and half of the red and black caviars, stirring well. Add immediately to the pasta and mix well, with a little reserved cooking water if it is too dry. Add the freshly ground pepper. Garnish with the remaining caviar and serve immediately. Timing is all important because the garlic, herbs, and caviar must cook a little but only in the heat given off by the onion and hot pasta. Serves 6.

CASTRATO AL ROSSO DEL CONTE

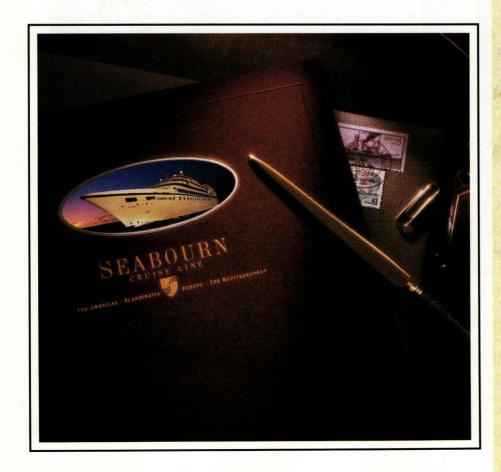
- 1 leg of lamb, boned and cut into large pieces
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 bottle Rosso del Conte Regaleali
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 cup brandy
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 pounds white mushrooms, sliced
- ½ pound pancetta

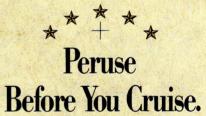
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 pounds whole baby onions, peeled
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons flour

Put the lamb together with the onion and bay leaves in the red wine and marinate in the refrigerator overnight. Drain the lamb pieces, reserving the marinade, and dry them with paper towels. Rub them with the olive oil and brown lightly in a frying pan. When the pieces have colored and the juices evaporated, add the brandy. Set fire and let the brandy burn until evaporated.

Place the meat in a heavy saucepan, adding the reserved marinade and salt and pepper to taste. Cover and cook slowly over a low flame for about 1½ hours. The sauce should just cover the meat; add additional wine if necessary.

While the meat is cooking, sauté the mushrooms and pancetta in oil until lightly colored. In a saucepan sauté the onions briefly in the butter. Add sugar and enough water to cover, and simmer uncovered until all the water is absorbed. When the meat is done, add the mushrooms-pancetta mixture and the onions. Simmer for a few minutes. Add the flour, dissolved in a little water, and bring to a boil, cooking over low flame for a few moments until the sauce is slightly thickened. Correct the seasoning if necessary. Serves 8–10. \triangle





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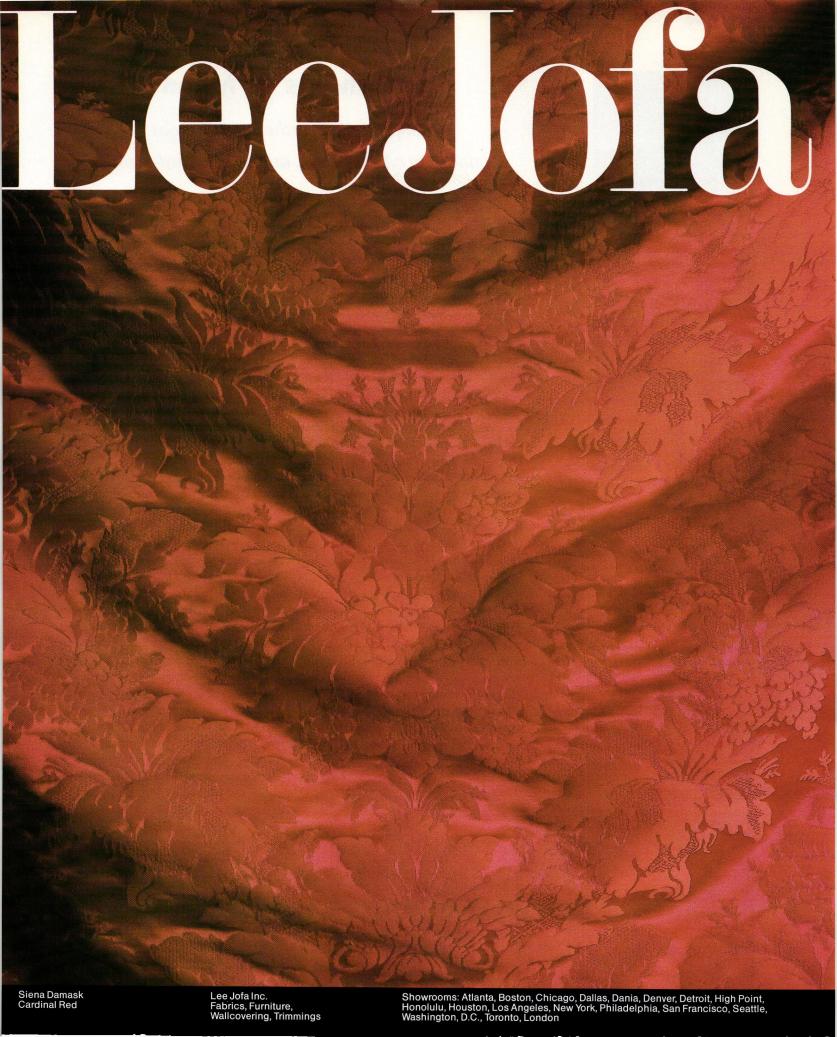
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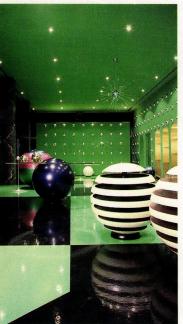
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Alessandro Guerriero, above, is one of the minds behind Museo Alchimia, a shop-cumgallery featuring objects whose roots began in Memphis. Left: A spherical theme informs the shop's recent Soli Collection, Below: Fornasetti's small space is filled with an impressive range of black and white objects. Below right: Books are treated as jewels at Franco Maria Ricci.

Merchants of Milan

Shops of the northern metropolis
stock everything from antico to avant-garde
By Peter Green

mid the variety and contradictions, the mesh of tradition and avant-garde, Milan has had one strong common thread: design. In addition, a commitment to quality and style has established Italy's northern metropolis as a shopping mecca. From the oldworld bookbindings of Legatoria Artistica to the sleek contemporary teakettles at Alessi, walking along the Milan storefronts is like leafing through a history of Italian design—a history that is being written as the shop windows change for the season.

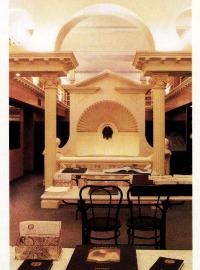
ALESSI When Alessandro Mendini's new cookware was unveiled at Alessi, the window displayed a mannequin of Mendini adorned with angel wings and dripping from head to toe in his pots and pans. This band of irreverent creativity is evident in the shop itself, where Alberto Alessi has brought together the unconventional designs of such names as Michael Graves, Robert Venturi, and Richard Sapper. Teakettles are the store's best-sellers, but Alessi also carries serving bowls, candlesticks, watches, clocks, and limited-edition prints. (Corso Matteotti 9; 2-795-726)

CENTRO BOTANICO In a quiet court-yard off the busy Via dell'Orso, a narrow

stairway leads to the shabby but genteel eighteenth-century flat that houses Centro Botanico, Angelo Naj Oleari's shop for lovers of greenery. Few living specimens are for sale; instead the proprietor offers classes for aspiring botanists and a phytopathological service for sick plants. Besides a generous assortment of books and seeds, the shop stocks an array of perfumes, soaps, and olive oils, many made from plants and trees cultivated in Naj Oleari's garden and greenhouse near Orvieto. (Via dell'Orso 16; 2-873-315)

ETRO Gimmo Etro began designing fabrics nearly 21 years ago and has since become Italy's prophet of paisleys. Etro's vibrant variations of that curved and curly shape, available at his home furnishings shop, makes even the patterns of Liberty of London look like just so many black and white checks. Besides place mats, bath towels, sheets, and bedspreads rich in purples, blues, reds, and greens, Etro has fabrics by the yard, all in paisleys. In an adjoining mahoganypaneled room—designed to resemble a pharmacy—Etro sells his line of men's and women's fragrances called-what else?—Paisley. (Fiori Chiari; 2-795-203) **IMMAGINAZIONE** Entering this shop on Via Brera is like stepping inside a small space in the back of Piero Fornasetti's imagination. The tiny room is crammed with plates, cups, obelisks, chairs, screens, cufflinks, and buttons silk-screened, often in trompe l'oeil, with the designer's idiosyncratic and amusing themes—eyes, suns, and images from seventeenth-century architectural perspective drawings. Although most of the objects are in black and white, Fornasetti's vision is anything but colorless. (Via Brera 16; 2-805-0321)





HG APRIL 1990

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Walking along the Milan store fronts is like leafing through a history of Italian design



FRANCO MARIA RICCI Franco Maria Ricci began publishing his exquisite limited editions amid the turmoil of the 1968 Communist revolution in Italy. While Ricci's efforts gained little appreciation then, today the two-story shop is so crowded during the winter holidays that people wait in line outside to get a glimpse of his shelves. Ricci's volumes are bound in black silk and printed on acid-free paper, and illustrations are tipped in by hand onto the page. The

books encompass a range of subjects in art and design, from the pyramids of Egypt to the contemporary fashions of Armani and Valentino, although a large number are devoted to painting. (Via Durini 19; 2-798-444)

binding laboratory of Mose Forte and his wife, Ornella Bacchetta, old volumes are rebound in the traditional handsewn way with marbled covers and endpapers. The couple also makes the usual selection of books for sketching, addresses, appointments, and diaries. A few yards up the Via Palermo, Forte creates custom shoeboxes, hatboxes, and linen trunks, and Milanese cognoscenti bring in their favorite wallpaper to be used as covering for Forte's handmade cardboard or wooden storage containers. (Via Palermo 5; 2-861-113)

MUSEO ALCHIMIA Behind a styleless façade on Via Torino you'll find the shop and gallery of Alchimia, a group of Italian designers whose work is addressed to the "decorative and superficial man." Alchimia delights in combining the playful and the beautiful in uncommon shapes and colors, yet the originality of their objects sometimes precludes utility. A spherical wood chest from the recent Soli Collection proves frustratingly inconvenient-each drawer must be lifted off to reach the one below. More successful—aesthetically and practically—is the sparkling violet coffee table, its round glass top etched with stars. Alchimia's designs are produced primarily in workshops in Brianza, and many rely on traditional skills of cabinetry, marquetry, and hand finishing. (Via Torino 68; 2-869-2296).

shed Margherita Motto has spread her enormous selection of furniture, housewares, and gourmet food over 2,200 square meters of a former mozzarella factory. Recent furniture offerings include a table and chairs by Mario Botta, bookshelves by Philippe Starck, and such reissued historic pieces as a Charles Rennie Mackintosh high-back

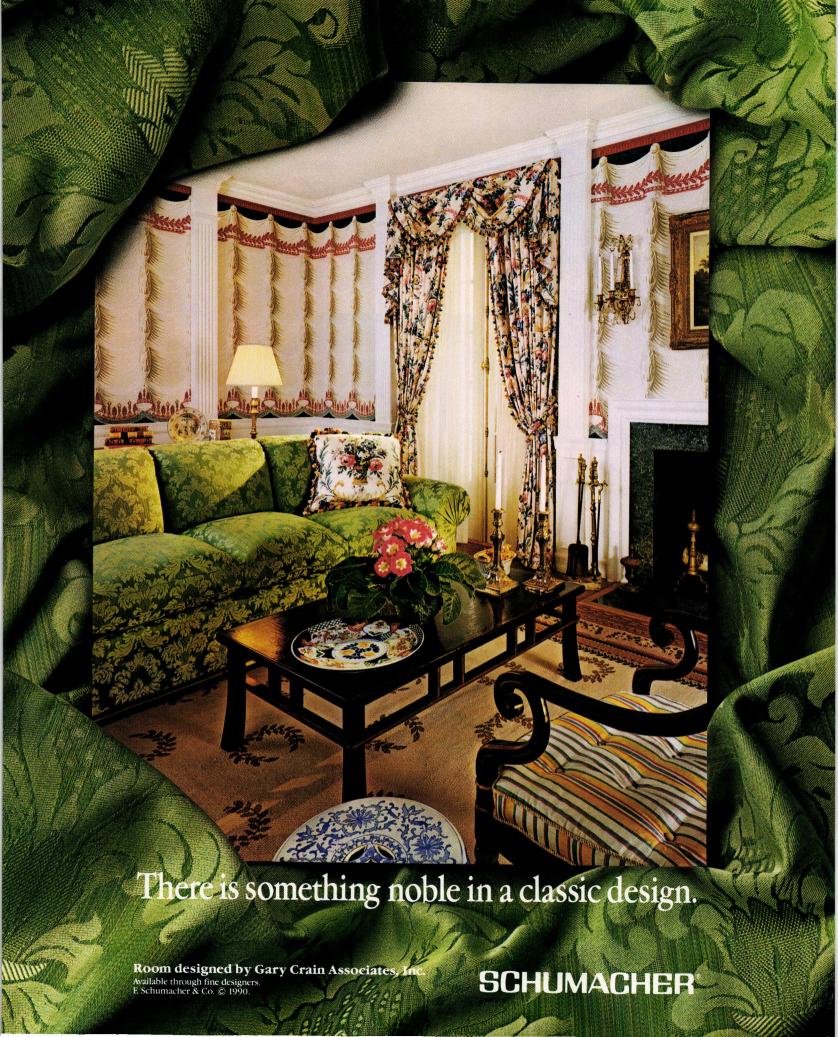
The enormous space that is Shed, above and top left, showcases Italian design as well as imported furniture and objects. Top right: Seventeenth-century frescoes provide a backdrop for handblown glass at Vetrerie di Empoli. Right: Candlesticks by Paolo Portoghesi join Alessi's silver and stainless-steel wares.

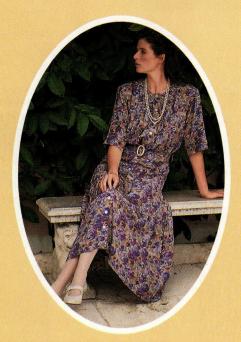


chair and a Mies van der Rohe sommier. A worldwide search for rare objects and gadgets has yielded such disparate discoveries as a Philippine rattan love seat and a Japanese birdcage. (Viale Umbria 42; 2-5519-0065)

Vetrerie di Empoli Cannot help but marvel at the oversize handblown glass designs of Franco Parentini populating the frescoed space of Gallarati-Scotti, a late seventeenth century palazzo. Parentini's creations, inspired by his late father, Ugo, a glassblower in Empoli, include giant fruit bowls and vases wound with ribbons of contrasting hues. Parentini focuses his talent on achieving a mastery of color, evident both in the verisimilar shades of his glass grapes and strawberries and the surreal tones of his amphoras. (Via Borgospesso 5; 2-540-8719) ▲







A silk print dress inspired by Monet's "Years at Giverny".



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Editor's Page

ACHIEVING AN INTERESTING EDITORIAL MIX IS ALWAYS A CHALLENGE—ONE THAT increases when geographic boundaries are limited. In preparing this special issue on Italy we had to find diversity among palazzi, apartments, and country houses, making difficult choices among venerable frescoes, ravishing gardens, and inventive modern interiors. That we had so much to choose from is largely to the credit of consulting editor Beatrice Monti della Corte, whose web of connections reaches throughout Italy as well as the international art and literary worlds. There were also European editor Deborah Webster, who flew from her Paris base to Milan on a num-

ber of occasions, and creative director Charles Gandee, who secured the scoop on Giorgio Armani's newly redecorated apartment and the story on influential young designer Matteo Thun and his family. Herbert Muschamp's friendship with Ettore Sottsass and their shared love for Venice yielded unexpected insights into that fabled city. Heather Smith MacIsaac, HG's architecture and design editor, was a special help with stories on Miuccia Prada and shopping in Milan. Gardening editor Senga Mortimer led photographer Langdon Clay through the doors of the legendary Knights of Malta compound in Rome as well as to Gore Vidal's retreat on the Amalfi coast.

In the private garden of the Knights of Malta on Rome's Aventine hill, buildings designed by Piranesi in the 1760s surround classic Italian parterres.

Prince Michael of Greece offers his first piece as an HG contributing editor on the maritime region of Tuscany where he and his family often visit. Then, too, we were lucky to have not only the keen eye of photographer Oberto Gili, who lives in New York and Italy, but also the observations of some extraordinary writers, including novelists Gregor von Rezzori and Shirley Hazzard, editor at large John Richardson, who profiles the great decorator Renzo Mongiardino, and Everett Fahy, chairman of the Department of European Paintings at the Metropolitan Museum. While restricting our scope to one country made achieving diversity more of a challenge, it also provided boundless inspiration for a fresh and surprising look at Italy today.

Many Morograd

EDITOR IN CHIEF





A family's Tyrolean Alps retreat
is a stronghold of regional art
By Gregor von Rezzori
Photographs by Alexandre Bailhache



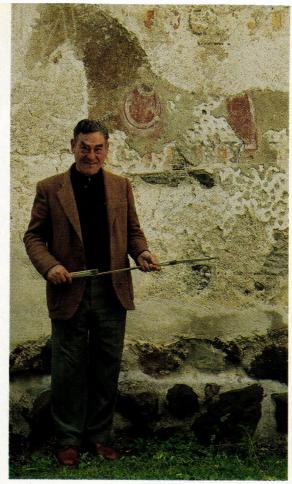
7 ITH A LOVER'S ARDOR AND A scholar's erudition, the baron tells the history of his gingerbread castle. It lies in the Valgardena, a green valley in the south of the Tyrolean Alps. The Italians call this region Alto Adige; the partly German-speaking population there, nostalgic for the times when it belonged to the glorious Habsburg empire, call it Südtirol. Both parties claim it as theirs. Baron Giorgio Franchetti, though considering himself a thoroughbred Italian, is much too cosmopolitan to take part in the debate over whose claim is better founded. Originally, he expounds, there were neither Italians nor Germans in the Valgardena but Rhaetians who spoke Ladino, a language rooted in Vulgar Latin like French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, and Rumanian. But the Rhaetians were a small people living in a remote area, and Ladino was about to dis-

appear. It was revived only centuries later—by a German.

Around the end of the first millennium the Holy Roman Empire was headed by a succession of German kings who went to Rome to be crowned emperor by the pope. To meet resistance from some Italian rulers, the northerners sent their armies over the Alps. Castles were built to secure the passes, and colonists settled around these strongholds. That is how Germans came to the southern Tyrol, though not to the Valgardena. It is a particularly pleasing part of the world, but no pass leads through the Alps at that point, so there was no need for a castle.

Many a great name of the Austrian aristocracy originated in the other valleys of Südtirol. One such family, stemming from Villandro in the Val d'Isarco, is that of the counts Wolkenstein. At the end of the fourteenth century Oswald von Wolkenstein gained fame as a minnesinger and wrote some of the most beautiful verses ever written in German. It was also he who revived Ladino. A couple of hundred years later—in 1616, to be exact—Ehrengard von Wolkenstein, another cultivated gentleman, chose the virginal Valgardena as the site for a fishing and shooting lodge that would look like a castle but provide comforts lacking in his ten real fortresses. Originally called Fischburg and later renamed Castel Gardena, it was used by the Wolkensteins until the middle of the nineteenth century.

It is quite an experience to listen to Giorgio Franchetti speaking about his predecessors at Castel Gardena. He is not linked to them by blood but by the passionate energy with which he consecrates himself to his various hobbies. A Maece-



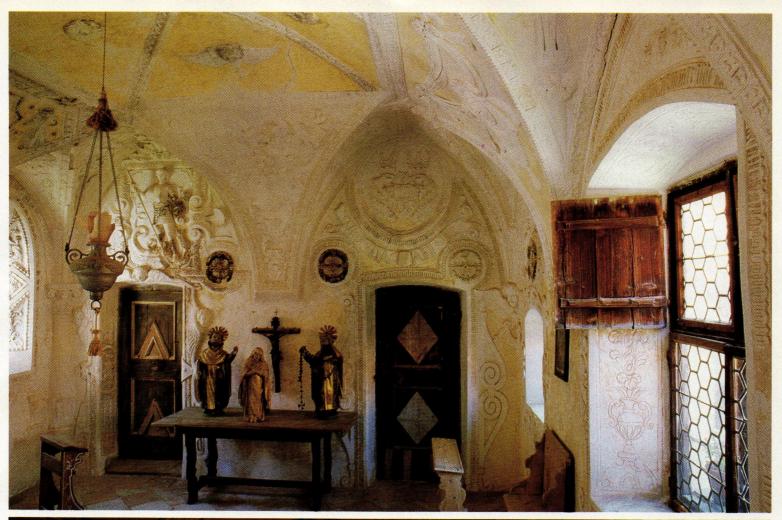
nas of the Italian art scene, he has crammed his apartment in a crumbling Roman palazzo with paintings and sculptures, mainly the works of conceptual artists whose maître à penser he became. The interest in art runs in the family: his sister Tatia is married to Cy Twombly, who shares the Franchettis' obsession with rescuing and restoring dilapidated houses and castles. There are quite a few such semi-ruins in Italy, and the ones purchased and renovated by Twombly or his brother-in-law combine precious works of art-from Roman sculptures to contemporary paintings—in a style that envisages the scientifically cozy domesticity of the year 2000. Castel Gardena is not among these abstracted beauties. It's as fresh as a crab apple just off the tree. Giorgio and his elder brother, Mario, who died tragically a few years ago, inherited it from their father, Carlo. With it they inherited his infatuation for enhancing

the castle's rustic charm. It is used—as it was by the Wolkensteins—as the family's summer retreat.

Nothing better illustrates the heterogenous composition of European aristocracy than the differences between the Wolkensteins and the Franchettis. While the former descend from warlike country squires, the latter were urban Sephardic merchants and bankers. They had come to Padua in the fifteenth century and flourished under the generous and open-minded Gonzagas, whose vision of architectural magnificence may have inspired Ehrengard von Wolkenstein to give Castel Gardena two courtyards like an Italian Renaissance princely residence. This refinement did not prevent Ehrengard's offspring from abandoning the castle and letting it decay. For half a century it was used as a poorhouse by the nearby community of Santa Cristina. In the meantime the Franchettis lived in splendor at a palazzo in Venice.

Carlo Franchetti's discovery of Castel Gardena was literally accidental. He just fell on it. Like his cousin Raimondo, the explorer, who gave one of his daughters, Afdera (later Mrs. Henry Fonda), the name of an Ethiopian volcano, Carlo was an avid mountain climber. An officer of the Alpini, he led a

Baron Giorgio Franchetti, *above*, holds the meter stick he carries on expeditions to historic buildings. The ghostly horse behind him is part of a fresco on a castle tower. *Opposite above:* Baroque plaster reliefs in the household chapel retain traces of original paint. Heraldic crests are interspersed with religious icons, such as Saint George and the Dragon over the door at left. *Opposite below:* Andrea Franchetti's bedroom, paneled in Trentino Renaissance style, is furnished with a 17th-century bed and other pieces from Alto Adige.







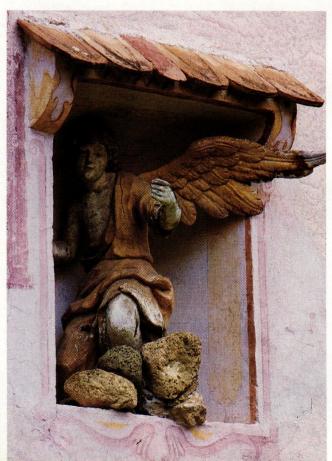


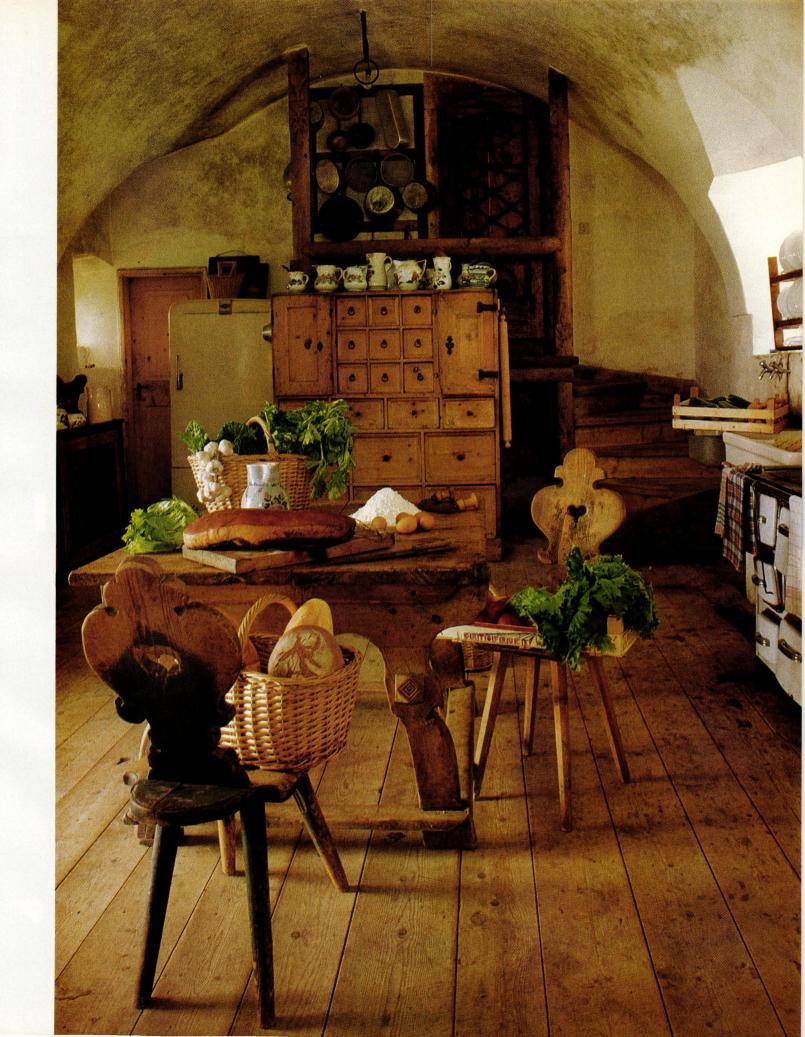


commission charged with tracing the new frontiers between Italy and Austria after the First World War. On an expedition to a peak above the Valgardena he slipped and, miraculously unhurt after a fall of ninety feet, rolled downhill till he came to a halt right in front of the castle. There it stood, in poor condition but still extraordinary. It was a genuine castle, not a fake like so many Gothic Revival copies of the nineteenth century and yet despite its belfry, battlements, and buttresses, it looked serene and livable. The two inner courts with their loggias, instead of giving it a foreign urban aspect, enhanced the typically local character of its architecture. Surrounded by meadows, ponds, and brooks, it was a castle in miniature, ideally suited to summer sojourns. Even more, it was the perfect toy for Carlo Franchetti. He bought the castle immediately. Thus began a romance that has involved the last three generations of Franchettis.

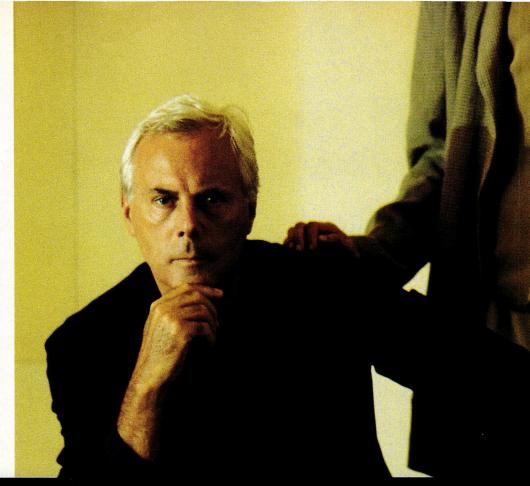
It all started with the usual (Text continued on page 222)

Once a smokehouse for venison, the kitchen, *opposite*, is now a family gathering place. Produce from the Franchetti garden rests on a medieval pine table and a chair with a double-eagle back inspired by the Austrian coat of arms. *Above:* One of the children's "dwarfs' rooms" opens onto a balcony. The faux marbre door frame, carved railings, and frescoed façade combine elements of Italian and Transalpine style. *Right:* A 17th-century angel beckons from a niche in the courtyard.





When the designer decided to re-tailor his palazzo in Milan, he turned to American architect Peter Marino By Charles Gandee Photographs by Oberto Gili



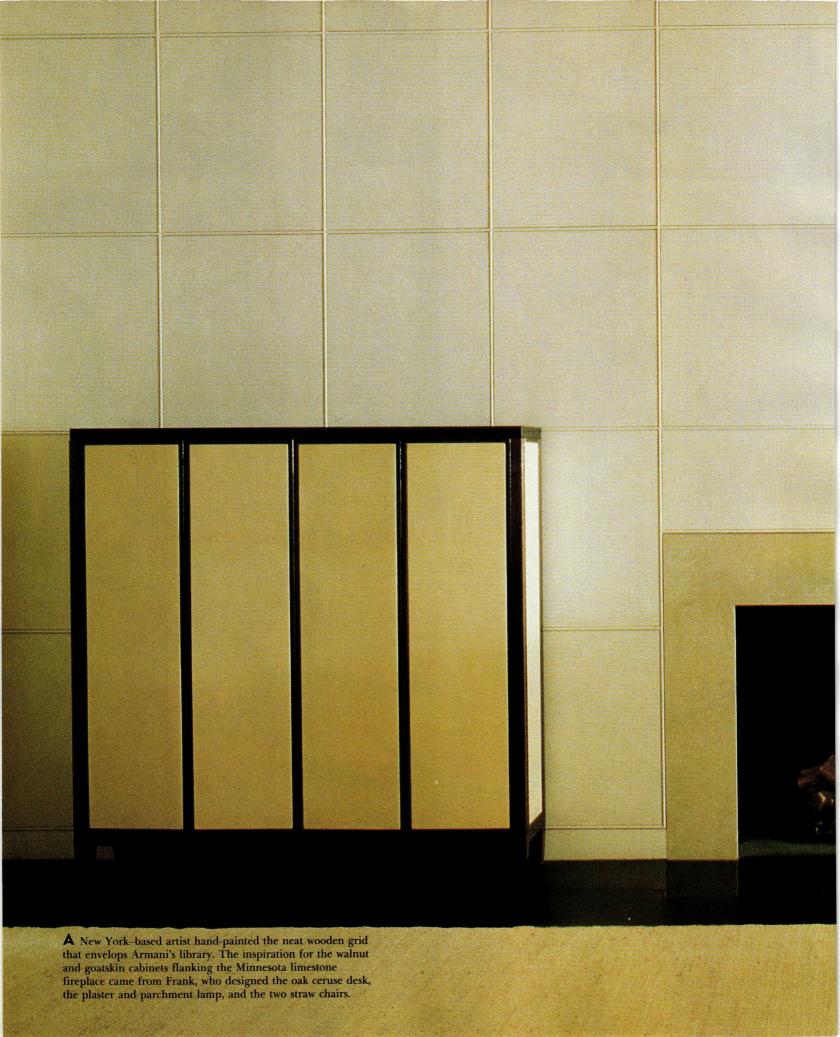
THE HOUSE OF ARMANI

A MASSIVE BLACK DOOR SEPARATES Giorgio Armani's office from his apartment at 21 Via Borgonuovo in Milan, and every two hours or so, during the three days I spent with a photographer in the recently renovated duplex, that massive black door would open, and on some pretext or other the great silverhaired designer would appear. Each time he did I felt it only polite to present him with the Polaroid of the shot we happened to be working on at the moment, and each time he would study the image and graciously compliment me on our effort. And then he would take my arm and direct me a few feet to the left or to the right, quietly offering, in halting English, that a slightly different perspective was "nice, no?" So we'd move the tripod, the massive black door would open again, and Giorgio Armani and I would go back to work.

Uncharacteristic though it was, I didn't mind deferring to my host—not





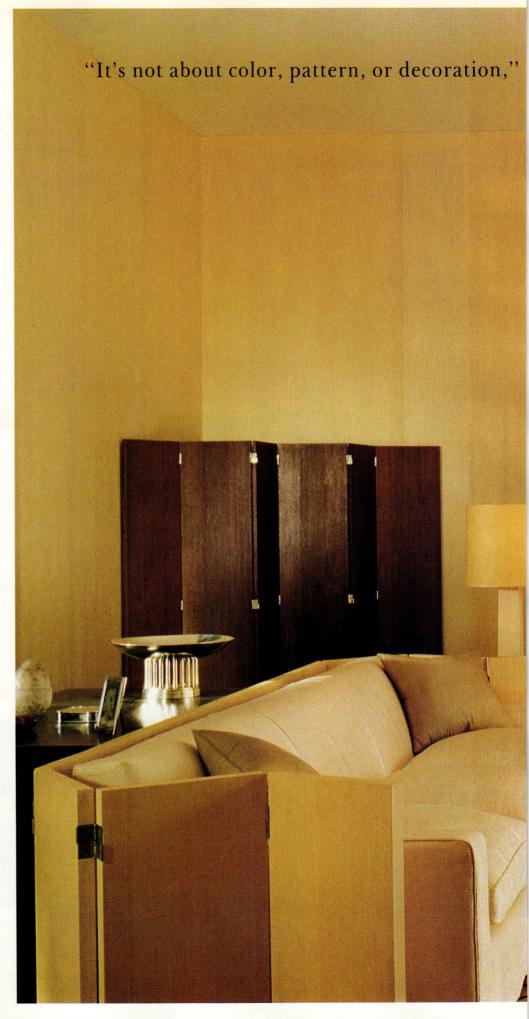




because he was my host but because only a fool would question the eye of the maestro, as they call Armani in Milan. Since 1975, when the then 41-year-old fashion designer made his official debut, his signature black label has come to represent some sublime variation on the classic theme of quiet good taste. W's John Fairchild even went so far as to dub him the "Jesuit monk of fashion," perhaps because his clothes rely on self-confident reserve rather than on some reckless show of unbridled creativity for their style. It is a disciplined aesthetic in which the sensuous drape of a supple fabric is all-in which what is subtracted is no less critical than what is added.

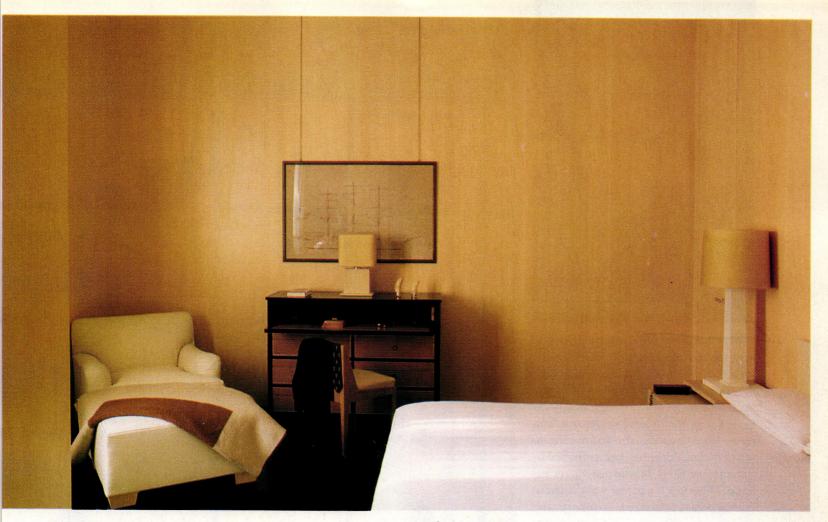
Although Armani has never wandered far from the path of luxurious simplicity, his most recent collections reveal a softer line and a looser silhouette. Gone, tellingly enough, are the power shoulder pads. The aesthetic shift is not insignificant—GQ even went so far as to call it a revolution. Not surprisingly, since Armani is an exceptionally consistent man, he recently decided to extend his newfound love of opulent ease beyond the confines of his design studio, to the other side of the massive black door. So he put in a call to Peter Marino, the New York-based architect and decorator whom Casa Vogue magazine had the foresight to dub the fashion designer's interior designer in 1979. To many the choice of Marino was surprising. The high-profile architect is not only an American, but his portfolio includes interior design projects for Yves Saint Laurent, Calvin Klein, Carla Fendi, Valentino, and, most recently, Donna Karan. Didn't it bother Armani that Marino had worked for the competition? Or that he is an American? "These remarks are absolutely not my concern," he says. "I was told he was a great professional, well organized, and extremely willing to meet his client's requests." Another possible explanation for the choice of Marino comes from Marino:

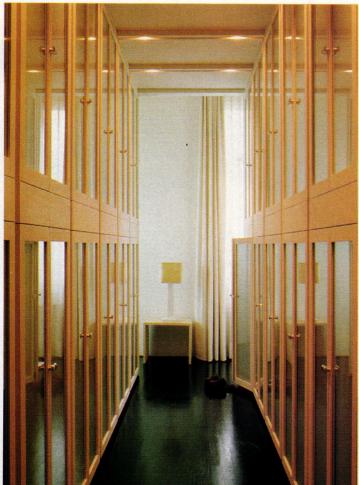
In Armani's oak-lined salon, architect Peter Marino mixed vintage Frank designs found in Paris with custom pieces made in Bologna. The raw silk fabric on the sofa was woven in Connecticut by James Gould.











"A fashion designer doesn't want to be dictated to, so he doesn't want to work with somebody who has a definite stamp, a definite look. I can do anything—my stylistic range is very very broad. Plus my concern has always been for quality, quality, quality—which is, of course, the great fashion designer's concern."

True to his word, Marino deferred to Armani when it came to charting the direction the renovation would take. "Giorgio is a decisive man," reports the architect with a smile. "He knows exactly what he wants." For his part, Armani will only say: "I suggested a period in the past as a point of reference, since the structure of the house was suitable for that kind of atmosphere." As a glimpse reveals, the period in the past Armani suggested, and Marino rallied around, was Paris in the thirties—more specifically, Jean-Michel Frank's Paris in the thirties. Why? "A great simplicity of line, the love for natural materials, modernity without futurism," explains Armani, who might also have been referring to his own aesthetic.

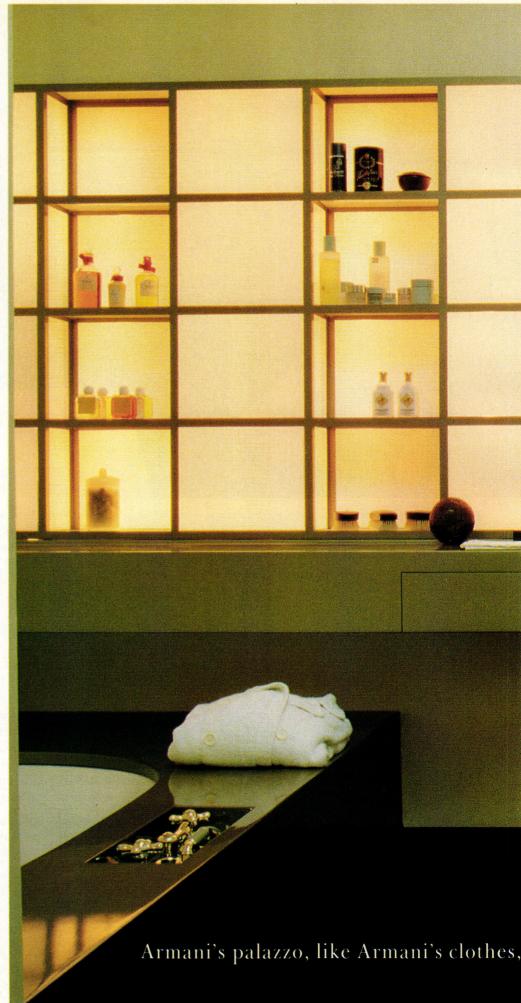
Armani's love of sensuous simplicity is as conspicuous in his creamy peach silk dress and duster for spring/summer 1990, opposite right, as it is in his recently renovated palazzo. Opposite left: For example, the parchment-walled dining room is only minimally outfitted with a bleached oak pedestal table by Peter Marino and oak ceruse chairs by Jean-Michel Frank. Upstairs, in Armani's private quarters, the spare aesthetic is no less rigorous. The designer's closet, left, and sycamore-lined bedroom, above, are models of elegant restraint. The black lacquer secretary with pigskin drawers was handcrafted in France and Italy.

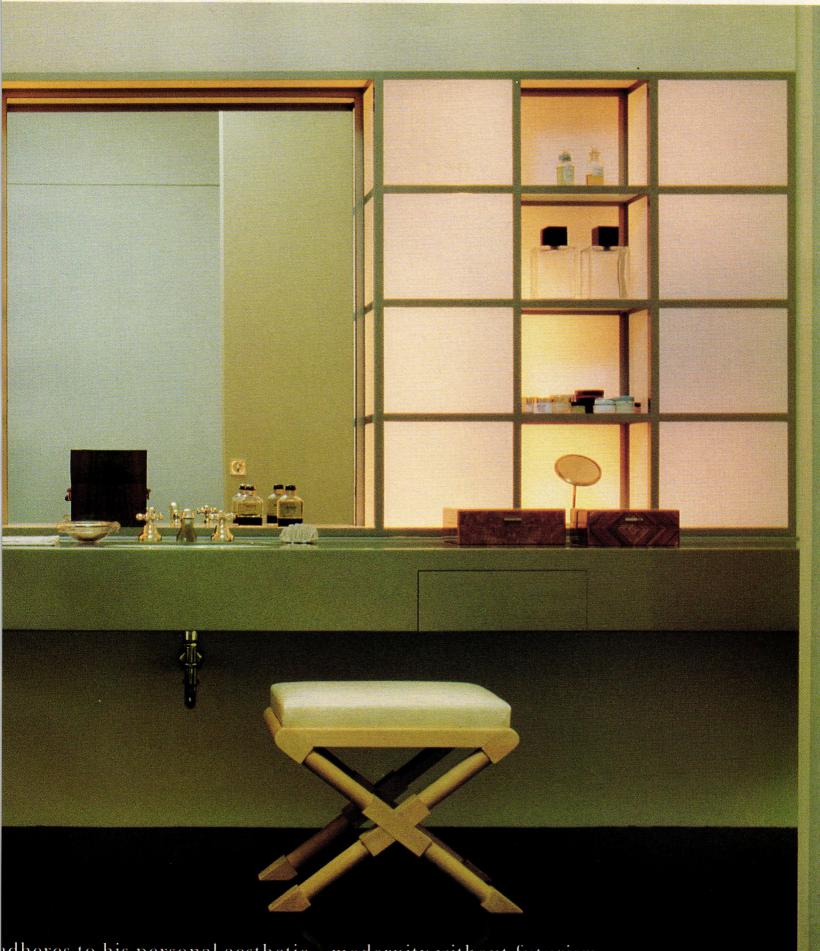


If Frank were alive today, he would undoubtedly feel right at home in the house of Armani. Not only does his near-iconic wood, parchment, and upholstered furniture reside in nearly every room of the bi-level apartment, but, more impressively, the rooms themselves feel as if they had been touched by the elegant early Modernist's peerless hand. Whether it's in the walls lined in meticulously crafted oak, sycamore, and goatskin or in the doors and casements meticulously crafted from French-polished ebony or in the palette that shifts in gentle increments from ivory to sand, Frank's spirit is alive and well and living in Milan. "It's not about color, pattern, or decoration. It's a game of textures and finishes," adds Marino. "And when you're playing that kind of game, one of the best people at it was Frank."

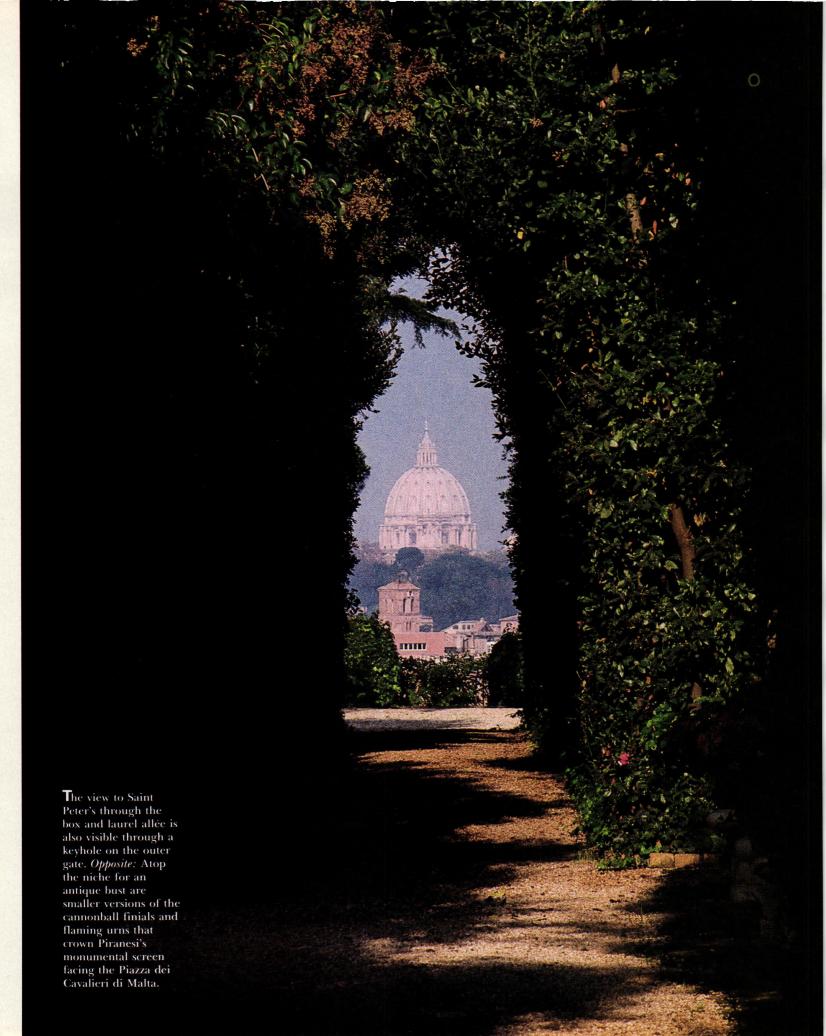
But is Armani, ever the perfectionist, content with his new rooms? Not quite. "I would like to have the time to fill them with personal objects, pictures, which can remove that aesthetically 'too perfect' look. And I would like as well to have the possibility of making some mistakes, thus bringing it closer to human nature." Until then, things at 21 Via Borgonuovo are pretty perfect.

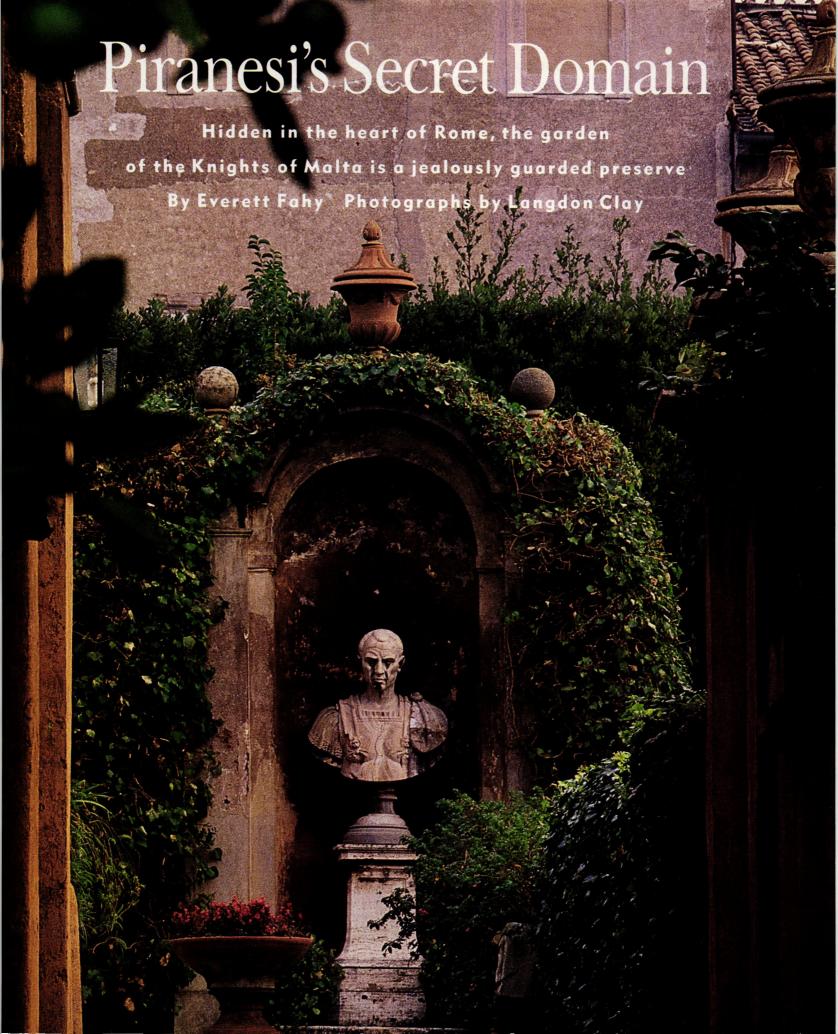
Armani wanted to preserve the gridded wall in the master bath, *right*, as a vestigial reminder of the apartment's previous incarnation. So Marino worked around the luminous vanity and added a goatskin-covered Jean-Michel Frank stool. *Above:* Three floors below, the designer's subterranean lap pool was also preexisting.

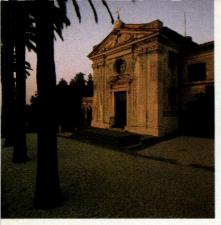




adheres to his personal aesthetic—modernity without futurism







SINCE THE SECOND CENTURY B.C., gardens have flourished on the slopes of the Seven Hills of Rome. At first they served as private parks where their owners could hunt, but with the advent of aqueducts the peculiarly Roman mixture of plants, water, and perspective evolved into a distinctive art that harmoniously integrated villas with

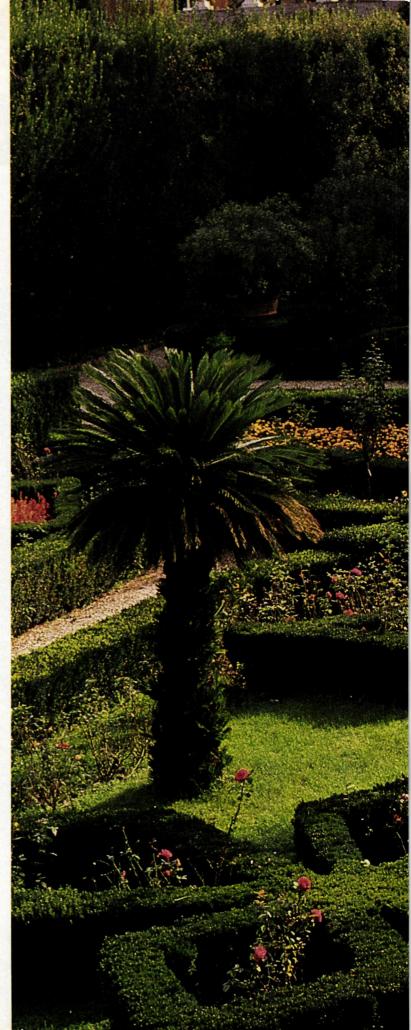
the surrounding landscape. The structure these gardens acquired in antiquity and the Renaissance changed little until the nineteenth century, when the fashion for English informality swept away many a formal design. One survivor is the jewel of a garden on the Aventine surrounded by structures that Piranesi designed in the 1760s for the Knights of Malta.

Properly called Knights of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, the Knights of Malta belong to a Roman Catholic order of laymen and monks that still enjoys nearly complete sovereignty. Like the Vatican, the order has extraterritorial rights, its own passports, and courts of law. Initially, the Knights maintained an eleventh-century pilgrims' hospital in the Holy Land, but after the Crusades the order retreated to Cyprus, then conquered Rhodes and eventually was given Malta, which Napoleon seized in 1798. Today rich and influential, they provide funds for hospitals and the needy throughout the world, from their headquarters in Rome.

In the sixteenth century the knights repossessed some dilapidated Roman property which had previously belonged to the by-then-defunct order of the Knights Templars. Standing on the southwest angle of the Aventine, it consisted of the land now occupied by the garden with a simple rectangular church and a monastery attached to two sides. From old engravings and a drawing by Poussin, one can see how the knights remodeled these medieval structures into a lofty fortress. Because the land fell away precipitously in two directions, access was possible mainly through the garden, and even today the best view of the façade of the church is from below on the banks of the Tiber.

Many tourists know the entrance to the Knights' garden because of its singular view through the keyhole to Saint Peter's one and three-quarter miles away. The trompe l'oeil recalls that of the colonnaded corridor Borromini designed about 1635 for a courtyard in the Palazzo Spada, but the illusions work quite differently. Borromini's disproportionately small columns persuade the eye that the statuette they frame is colossal. Piranesi seemingly reduces the enormous

In the sunken garden of the Knights of Malta, right, box hedges in the shape of crosses frame beds of roses, marigolds, and salvia. Climbing roses are trained over a tall trellis between the palms. At right is the 17th-century Kaffeehaus. Known in Rome by the German name, such pavilions were cool retreats for coffee and literary conversation. Terra-cotta pots in the shade garden beyond are planted with oleander. Above: Santa Maria del Priorato, the medieval church Piranesi restored in the 1760s.









dome of the basilica to the size of a thumbnail.

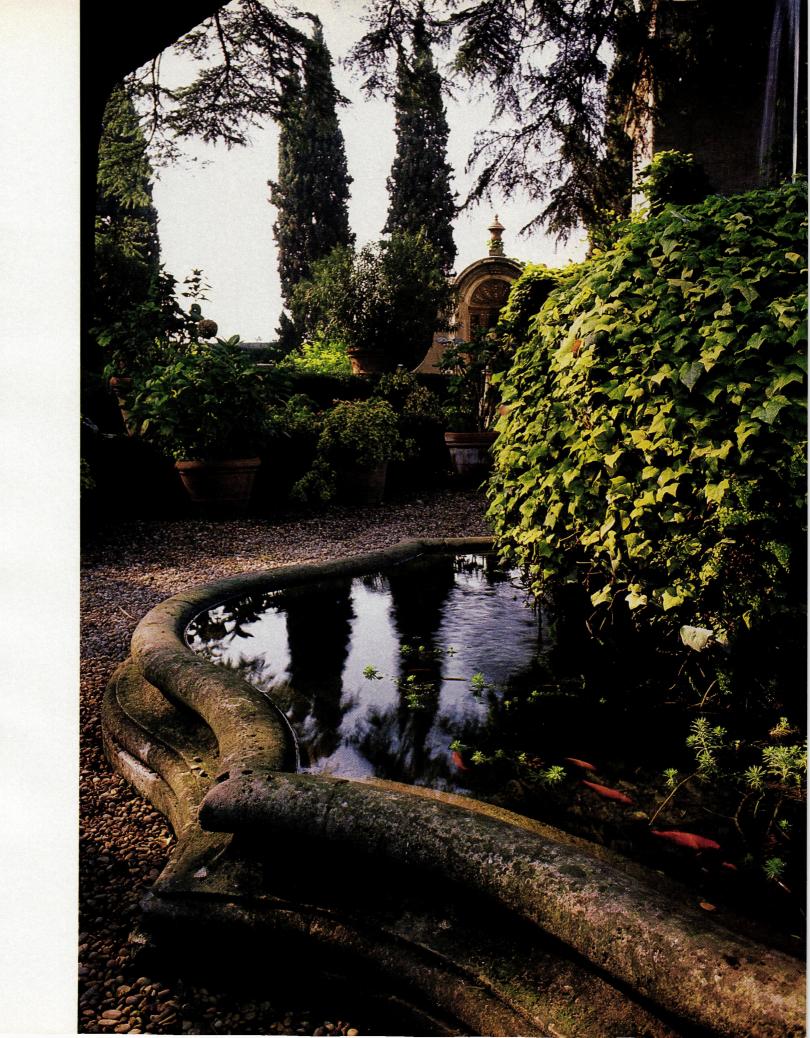
For the entrance Piranesi designed a large screen with a low pediment topped with four cannonball finials and five urns carved to look as though they are aflame. To either side of the door are pairs of blind niches surmounted by stucco reliefs of military trophies, allusions to the long-past deeds of the

Knights of Malta. The entrance stands on the north side of a piazza that Piranesi created as a monumental forecourt to the garden, in place of an ancient Roman cul-de-sac. Piranesi greatly enlarged this narrow road and enclosed the resulting space within high walls crowned by stelae, or decorative reliefs, flanked by tall obelisks. The reliefs (Piranesi's sketches for them are preserved in the Pierpont Morgan Library) consist of an exuberant jumble of Maltese crosses and Etruscan motifs. When the stelae were new, they must have made an eerie silhouette against the sky; now they are dwarfed by cypresses which, sadly, have been allowed to grow behind them.

Inside the entrance screen the plan of the garden is deceptively simple. There is an allée of laurel and box clipped to form a green tunnel running straight from the portal to a terrace overlooking the Tiber, the Janiculum, and Saint Peter's. Immediately to the east of this leafy passageway is a high wall, interrupted about a third of the way down by a portico reminiscent of the entrance screen and again adorned with flaming urns. It marks the division between two parterres to the west of the allée: the one closer to the entrance consists of eight beds converging on a circular fountain erected in the eighteenth century by Cardinal Flavio Chigi; the farther parterre is sunken so that its geometric beds can be seen from the windows of the priory, or, as it has come to be known, the Villa of the Knights of Malta.

Cardinal Benedetto Pamphili, grand prior of the Knights in Rome from 1681 to 1730, (Text continued on page 220)

A pool reflects the walled enclosure, *opposite*, that Edith Wharton called a "real 'secret garden,' full of sunny cloistered stillness, in restful contrast to the wide prospect below the terrace." *Above:* A Roman bust behind the entrance screen. Palm fronds and contrasting foliage add texture to geometric parterres. *Above left:* Shrubby daturas and beds of bergenia flank the entrance to the Kaffeehaus.

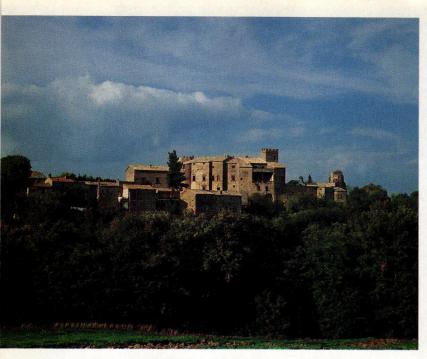






Purely Balthus Inside and

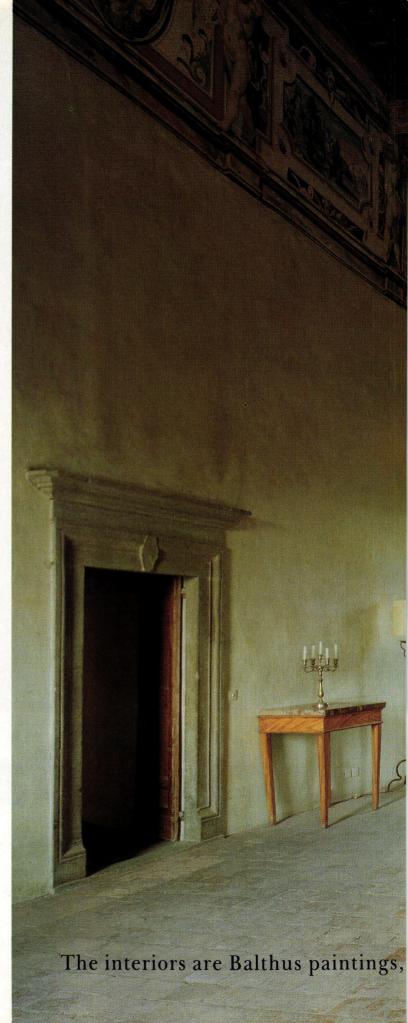
OUT, THE PAINTER'S BARONIAL CASTLE NEAR VITERBO CARRIES
THE SPIRIT AND TEXTURE OF HIS ART INTO THREE DIMENSIONS
BY GIULIANO BRIGANTI PHOTOGRAPHS BY EVELYN HOFER



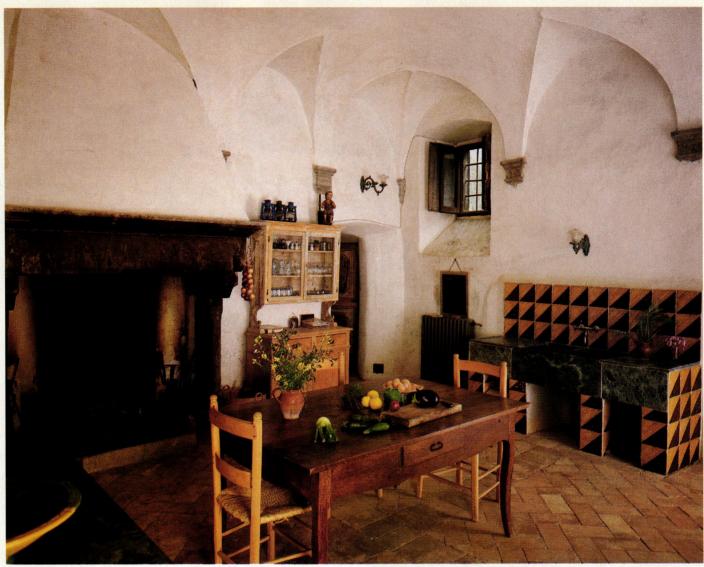
OUNT BALTHAZAR KLOSSOWSKI DE ROLA AND THE PAINTer Balthus are, as everyone knows, one and the same person. But it would perhaps be more accurate to say that they are two people in one, in the sense that Balthus the painter and a great painter at that—never forgets that he is Balthazar Klossowski, Count de Rola, the descendant of an ancient noble Polish family who, he claims, is related to the Romanovs and Lord Byron, among others. He is a great gentleman, in the meaning that word carried before the French Revolution, during the time of that douceur de vivre whose passing Talleyrand so deeply regretted. On the other hand, Count de Rola can never forget he is Balthus—that he was born a painter and therefore cannot keep himself from entrusting all the choices he makes in life to his soul and his eye as a painter.

Balthus's luminous spatial vision and his love for the Italian Renaissance synthesis of form and perspective, combined with an equally deep love for the purity and quintessential elegance of Far Eastern art, have guided him in his choice of places in which to live. For his own houses he prefers the vast and severe spaces of the Renaissance, with their sense of true grandeur, to the intimate refinement of later country retreats in the French manner. This preference helps explain why Balthus chose his castle at Montecalvello, in the Lazio region, which he purchased during the 1970s while serving as director of the French Academy in Rome. With the minimum retouching imaginable and a use of space ineffably balanced between Piero della Francesca and Zen, he has managed to

Balthus restored 16th-century frescoes in the main sala, *right*, a room whose austere grandeur recalls settings in the artist's own paintings. Seemingly plain walls have been layered with shades of yellow and cream and then scratched to create a mottled effect. Wrought-iron lamps, made by a local blacksmith to Balthus's design, stand on an original terracotta floor. *Above:* The castle dominates the hamlet of Montecalvello. *Preceding pages:* Balthus and his wife, the painter Setsuko, in their customary kimonos. Frescoes in the manner of Raphael line Balthus's favorite vantage point for sketching the hilly landscape of the Lazio region.



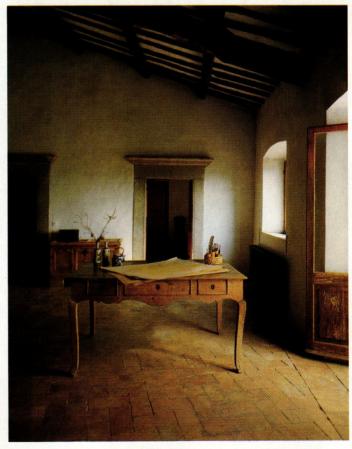


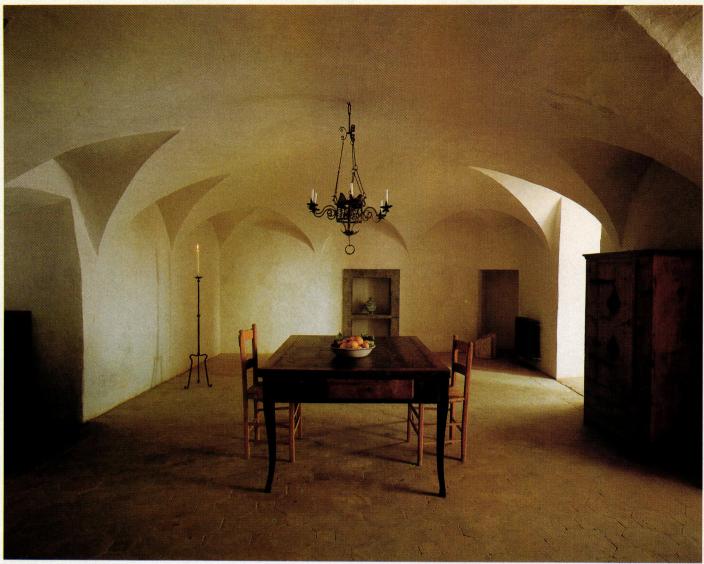


impress the clear and shining mark of his personality upon the ancient citadel.

You could search in vain for the name Montecalvello in many maps of central Italy. If you find it at all, it might be in fine print, in some road map of Lazio, on one of the byroads that run along the west bank of the Tiber between Bomarzo and Bagnoregio and then branch off toward Lake Bolsena among the foothills of the Ciminian Hills. The Touring Club Guide grants it but a few lines: "Montecalvello, altitude 168 m., a few dozen inhabitants, is a picturesque castle-hamlet whose population is in sharp decline. Once the property of the Calvelli family from Viterbo, it passed into the hands of the Pamphilis in the year 1648. It has an imposing baronial palace with sixteenth-century decorations." That is all. And I suspect that the decline in the population has been sharply progressing, considering that during my last visit there I met only two people.

The walls of Montecalvello enclose a few semi-abandoned buildings alongside a crumbling square overgrown with weeds and dominated from above by the castle's stately sixteenth-century façade. Legend has it that this compound dates back to the thirteenth century, the era of battles waged between Emperor Frederick II and Pope Innocent IV in which one Alessandro Calvello was involved. A Ghibelline from Viterbo, he seized the



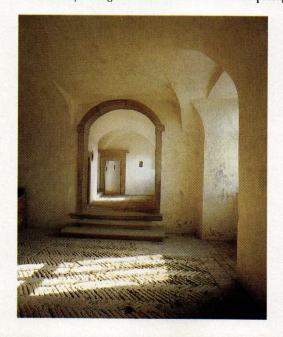


feudal estate to which he gave his name from the Guelph family of the Monaldeschis, who, however, in the typical course of such communal feuds later won it back. The member of the Pamphili family who eventually bought the castle in the seventeenth century was the infamous Donna Olimpia, sister-in-law of the reigning pontiff, Innocent X.

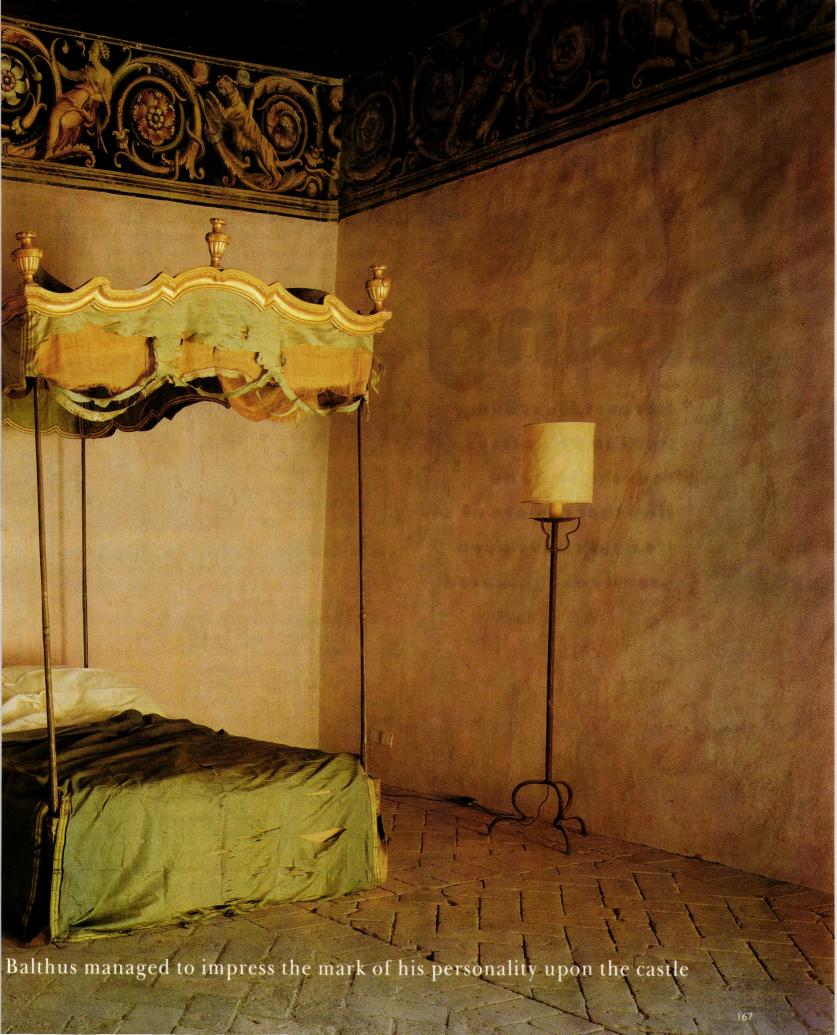
The architecture of the castle is connected exclusively with the Monaldeschis, whose coat of arms is carved on the façade and painted in the lovely frescoed friezes that adorn the loggia and some of the rooms. So potent, however, is the reputed wickedness of the woman who later owned Montecalvello that even today people call it Donna Olimpia's castle. When I visited there for the first time, many years ago, the castle was uninhabited and, if I remember correctly, up for sale. I wandered through an interminable procession of large vacant rooms with heaps of debris piled up on the floors in the company of an old caretaker who told me tales of savage crimes and love affairs drowned in blood at the hands of hired assassins. He even showed me a window from which it was said the cruel Donna Olimpia had cast lovers of whom she had tired into the ravine below.

The somber Stendhalian atmosphere and the traces of the dark criminal plots that linked Montecalvello to Donna Olimpia are far removed from the (*Text continued on page 224*)

In the dining room, above, a 17th-century chandelier hangs above a country table. Balthus had the floor level raised more than four feet to make the vaulted room less overwhelming and to bring diners closer to light from the window. Opposite above: The kitchen is also furnished with regional pieces. Old tiles surround the marble sink. Opposite below: Japanese porcelains and artist's materials are arranged on an antique desk in a third-story sitting room. Below: The entrance passageway.









Venice Rising

a to f

Herbert Muschamp
and Ettore Sottsass
tour the city and
find that rumors of
its death have been
greatly exaggerated



WEEP NO MORE FOR VENICE. TAKE OFF THE black armband; rid your mind of that stale Romantic equation between Venice and death. And cancel the comparisons to Disneyland, the flip take on Venice as a pop tourist version of its mighty former self. These views of Venice, once fresh, now come between the city and ourselves like a blanket of dust. There has always been a lot to see in Venice; the trick is to refresh

the eye that sees it. Start with the fact that Venice is not in imminent danger of sinking into the sea. Water is no longer pumped from beneath the lagoon, and some measurements even show that the city is rising. Although lovers of decorous decay will not be disappointed by the look of Venice today, restoration projects undertaken since the 1966 floods have given new life to ancient buildings and carved out a

new industry in preservation technology. But the real change in the look of Venice today is not due to these efforts to reverse centuries of physical deterioration. Venice looks different primarily because of shifts in our perspective: changes in the world outside and in the way we



view ourselves. After all, a visitor from New York, accustomed to crumbling highways, rotting piers, and exploding steam pipes at home, hardly needs to come here for an immersion in urban decrepitude.

It was a classically Venetian reflection on death that started me thinking about this shift. I was sitting on a terrace on the Grand Canal, looking across the water at the Salute, the most glorious of the city's "plague churches," wondering at a culture that would pledge to create a beautiful building in exchange for deliverance from disease. Then it occurred to me that we are closer to the people who built the Salute than we used to think: we too belong to a civilization that has yet to banish plagues. We have been to the moon; we can make all kinds of things with plastic. But we are no longer separated by the myth of our modernity from eras past when cities lived in fear of plagues.

Even before AIDS began to chip away at that myth, the modern barrier between ourselves and the past was in pretty sorry repair. For a quarter of a century, architects have been hammering away at this wall, questioning the stability of its foundations in reason, science, and progress. If Postmodernism has not demolished the wall (mercifully, unless you think the status quo can't be improved upon), it has at least punched out huge chunks, creating windows on the world of the past on the other side. And the view through some of those windows is the vista before me: Venice.

The pleasure of walking on a floor, top left. Architecture must face the sky, above left



It's just over there, a bit to the left of the Salute, that Aldo Rossi moored his floating theater, the Teatro del Mondo, through the summer of 1980. The theater's octagonal wooden tower, an embodiment of Rossi's ideal of architecture as the vessel of memory, held its own in the Venetian skyline for just a few months, then drifted out to sea to become a memory itself, perhaps the most haunting icon Postmodernism has produced. Rossi wrote that his theater was sited "in a place where architecture ended and the world of the imagination or even the irrational began." And for many of the architects who

participated in the 1980 Venice Biennale (for which Rossi's theater provided the centerpiece), the city was a symbolic

point of departure, a place to leave behind the austere rational world of Modern

Where else but in Venice can you see desperation on the face voyage of fantasy, pleasure, of the tourist who is *not* lost?

architecture and embark on a voyage of fantasy, pleasure, color, opulence, and memory. Hans Hollein, Michael Graves, Léon Krier, Paolo Portoghesi, and Venturi, Rauch & Scott Brown were among the architects who participated in a polemical exhibition whose purpose was to proclaim "The Presence of the Past."

The show's organizers could not have picked a more poetically just site to mount a Postmodern assault. For in the early years of the century Venice symbolized a past whose persistence the Futurists hoped to bury. "Let us burn the gondolas, rocking chairs for cretins, and raise to the heavens the imposing geometry of metal bridges," exhorted the Futurist ringleader Marinetti in *Against Past-loving Venice*. This was not the first time Venice had served as a focus for architectural controversy over the relationship of the present to the past. In the 1850s John Ruskin commandeered the city as a symbolic

battleground for the Victorian war of the styles between Classical and Gothic. For Ruskin, who considered Venetian Gothic the noblest style ever produced, "it is in Venice, and in Venice only, that effectual blows can be struck at this pestilent art of the Renaissance." And Ruskin's campaign, in turn, was an echo of a debate that had raged

three centuries earlier when the Classical forms of the Renaissance began to displace the Gothic style. Many Venetians saw no need to revive ancient Rome because they believed their city already was Rome. Why bother to evoke an empire when you already are one? Gothic architecture in Venice was a predominantly secular style that glorified the Republic's pioneering mercantilism and enshrined a system of government that descended from Rome's republican institutions. As Manfredo Tafuri declares in his brilliant book *Venice and the Renaissance*, here "there is no contradiction between tradition and innovation, development and memory,



continuity and renewal, sacred and mundane."

To trace the past in Venice is not to walk the straight line of conventional art history but to describe a curving path that doubles back on itself like the canal coursing through the city's heart. To love Venice is to embrace disorientation, in space as well as time. In other cities you see tourists in a panic when they are lost. Where else but in Venice can you see desperation on the face of the tourist who is *not* lost? The visitor who, held in the grip of the main routes, with their prominent yellow signs ever pointing the way indulgently back PER SAN MARCO, search-

es in bewilderment for that chink in the wall that will open into the labyrinth of some imagined secret Venice?

Mary McCarthy believed that one searched for that chink in vain: "The tourist Venice is Venice." But others have found that familiarity breeds fantasy. In Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cit*ies, Marco Polo entertains Kublai Khan each night with de-

scriptions of the amazing cities he has seen on his travels: Adelma, Pyrrha, Zirma, Eusapia. They are all, the emperor comes to realize, but different descriptions of Venice, Marco's hometown. Indeed, as the novel's conclusion turns the story inside out, Kublai begins to

grasp that he, his court, and his entire empire are themselves destined to be part of Venice, fabrications of the city's desire to hear Marco's tales of the fabulous East. "It is not the voice that commands the story," Marco teases. "It is the ear."

And it is the eye that commands Venice to assume the shape of its beholder. Even before the 1980 Biennale the city's image was recast in the Palladian quotations of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, who have made nearly annual pilgrimages to the city for (Text continued on page 224)





The stones of Venice, above. Never forget angels, right

F THE BUSINESS OF AMERICA IS BUSI-I ness, the business of Italy is family. Miuccia Prada, granddaughter of the founder of one of Milan's most elegant purveyors of leather goods, is at once the pride and plaint of her parents. In the ten years that she has directed design at Prada, she has elevated the company to international status, an accomplishment that would make any family proud. But in so doing, she put a real spin into a firm that has carried and catered to the traditional for nearly a century. The same free spirit that rejected the family business and took up the study of political science returned to the fold and added women's clothing to the traditional line of luxurious leather trunks and shoes, belts, and gloves. Handbags of man-made materials such as woven nylon now sit alongside those of exotic natural skins. New shops designed by contemporary Italian archi-

tects opened in Paris, New York, Madrid, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore and elsewhere in Italy, introducing Prada to audiences beyond the well heeled or simply well informed who have long made pilgrimages to Milan's famous Galleria not because it is an architectural masterpiece but because it houses the splendid turn-of-the-century Prada shop.

In bringing Prada up to the twentyfirst century, Miuccia has embraced the modern. Her designs, choice of colors, combinations of materials, and acceptance of industrial manufacture alongside old-world craftsmanship render

Miuccia Prada, below, wearing an oversize shirt, tapered pants, and faille stole of her own design, relaxes in her Milan apartment in front of a painting by Mario Cavaglieri. Right: Miuccia and her husband Patrizio Bertelli's farmhouse near Arezzo. Details see Resources.



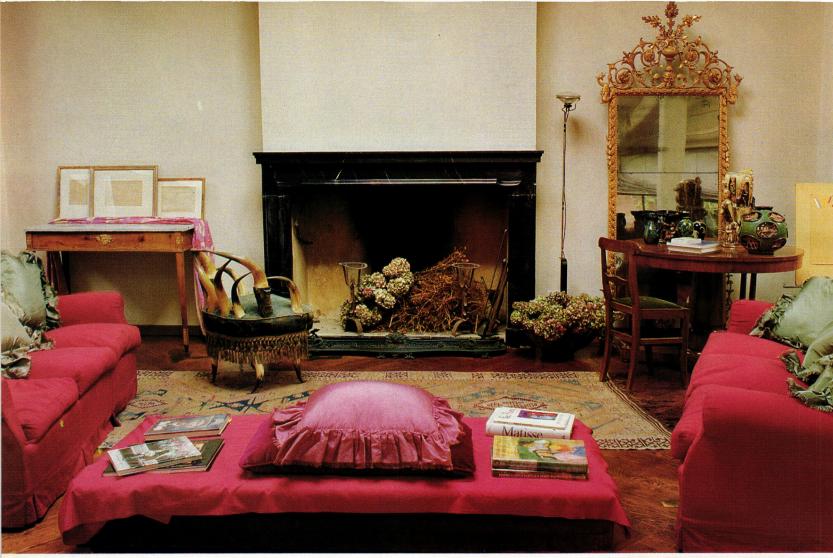




Pride of the Pradas

At home in Milan and Tuscany, the guiding spirit of the venerable leather goods firm continues a long family tradition

By Heather Smith MacIsaac Photographs by Alexandre Bailhache



leather goods stamped with the names of other reputable houses no less fine but considerably less exciting. The freshness of her ideas, though, is anything but a rejection of the tradition she has inherited. Her appreciation of and respect for the past are as strong as her desire to make something original: "The story of what has come before is important. I'm not aiming so much to invent as to rethink the past and perhaps use it in a different fashion. What engages me is combining opposites in unconventional ways—the old with the new, the refined with the primitive, the natural with the machine-made."

Miuccia's two residences—an apartment in Milan and a country house near Arezzo, the hometown of her husband, Patrizio Bertelli, director of the company that manufactures Prada's wares—are entirely consistent with her design philosophy. Though living in lofts is now commonplace in American cities, in Milan it is rare. Rarer still is Miuccia's

city place, a half-and-half combination of traditional apartment and open loft. The ground-floor offices of a circa 1800 apartment building became bedrooms, bathrooms, and a dressing room. A storage shed behind it was converted into a new white living area spacious enough to accommodate the precious—a collection of Capodimonte bronze figures—and the practical—a playpen of toys belonging to Miuccia and Patrizio's one and a half year old son, Lorenzo.

In the vast skylit living room, nothing matches, yet everything fits. Lengths and bits of fabric serve double duty—as inspiration for Miuccia's collections for

In the Milan living room, above, an 18th-century Venetian console, a horn chair found in London, and an antique Italian mirror flank the fireplace. Right: One and a half year old Lorenzo presides over the country kitchen where clusters of grapes hang from cane poles. Opposite above: Cavaglieri's painting Romanticismo and jugs and platters by the Florentine potter Pattarino decorate the living room in the country.



"The story of what has come before is important. I'm not aiming so much to invent as to rethink the past and perhaps use it in a different fashion"



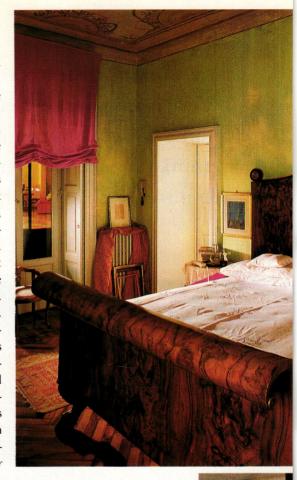


Prada and as covers and ornaments for furniture ranging from an Empire table to a set of 1930s dining chairs. Panels of Fortuny silk hung from the rafters, and freestanding bookcases, whose backs are covered with old striped moiré, divide the big space into seating, library, and dining areas. Drawings by Mario Cavaglieri, an Italian Impressionist whose work Miuccia and her husband have been collecting for a decade, are tucked behind fabric from a skirt by fashion designer Vivienne Westwood which is draped over a Venetian console. Moroccan sashes wind around a Venini vase from the twenties atop the piano.

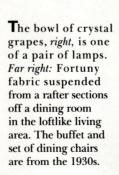
Fabrics in gold, chartreuse, salmon, violet, and cream accent comfortable sofas and banquettes upholstered in a clear purply red. "I don't like brilliant red on people, but I adore it in the house," she explains. Red appears in a stripe on material covering the dining chairs, in the candles supported by nineteenth-century Italian silver candelabra, in the shades on bedroom double doors leading outside, and in paintings by Cavaglieri.

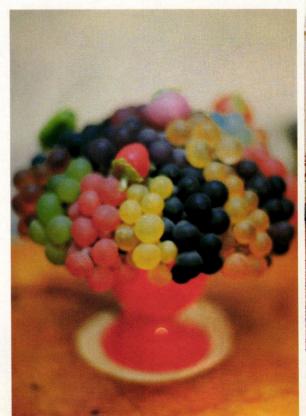
Paintings by Miuccia's favorite artist reappear in the country house, as does her color of choice. A purple and red striped fabric covers the upholstered furniture in the living room. Scarlet canvas curtains pull across the arches of the loggia, and a crimson club chair in the kitchen is Lorenzo's chosen post. But the feel of this former monastery turned farmhouse is intentionally different. "The house is only ten minutes from Arezzo, but there is not another building in sight," says Miuccia. "We've been proceeding slowly with the renovation, so it still looks as though no one has intervened in centuries. Outside, we've planted four to five hundred trees; inside, we've just brought the house up to the standards of modern comfort. It's an irregular house, but rather than straightening out the layout, I decided to play up the informality by decorating in a fairly grand way. Our place in the city has a formal plan with the furniture casually arranged. Here it is just the opposite."

Miuccia, who is pregnant with her second child, works everywhere—at home in the city, in the elegant villa on Via Melzi d'Eril which houses her showroom and offices, on the plane en route to the more than twenty Prada shops. But judging from her spring collection for Prada, the four to five months she spends in Tuscany every year are an invaluable source of ideas. Miuccia has harnessed the natural world and given it new elegance. Colors of the earth, sky, and olive trees turn up in raw and iridescent silks and finely woven cottons. A dress reminiscent of traditional peasant clothing is done up in hopsack, its bodice encrusted with beads of stone and wood. Feathers adorn sandals of snakeskin. Bits of shell and coral and brightly colored glass are embroidered onto collars and spell out the name Prada on handbags of woven nylon. The primitive and luxurious have never been so compatible. Be it an interior or wardrobe, as Miuccia says, "the idea is one—what I'm trying to do is create a certain atmosphere." ▲ Editor: Deborah Webster



"What engages me is combining opposites in unconventional ways—the old with the new, the refined with the primitive, the natural with the machine-made"



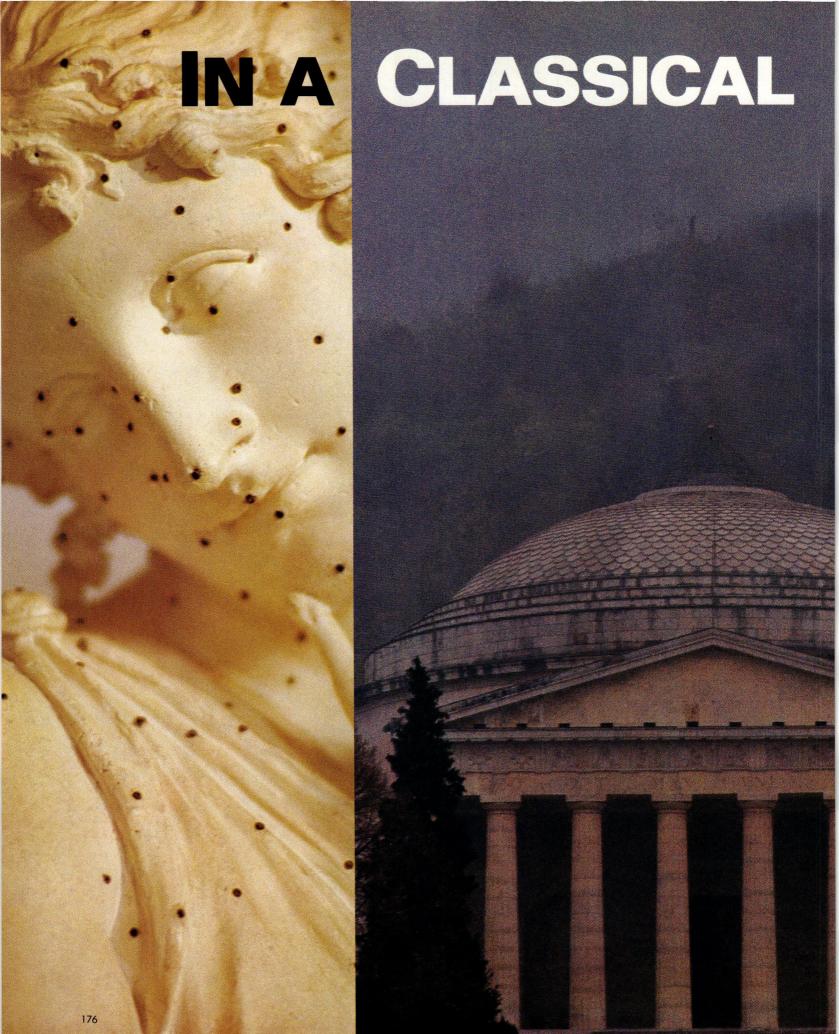


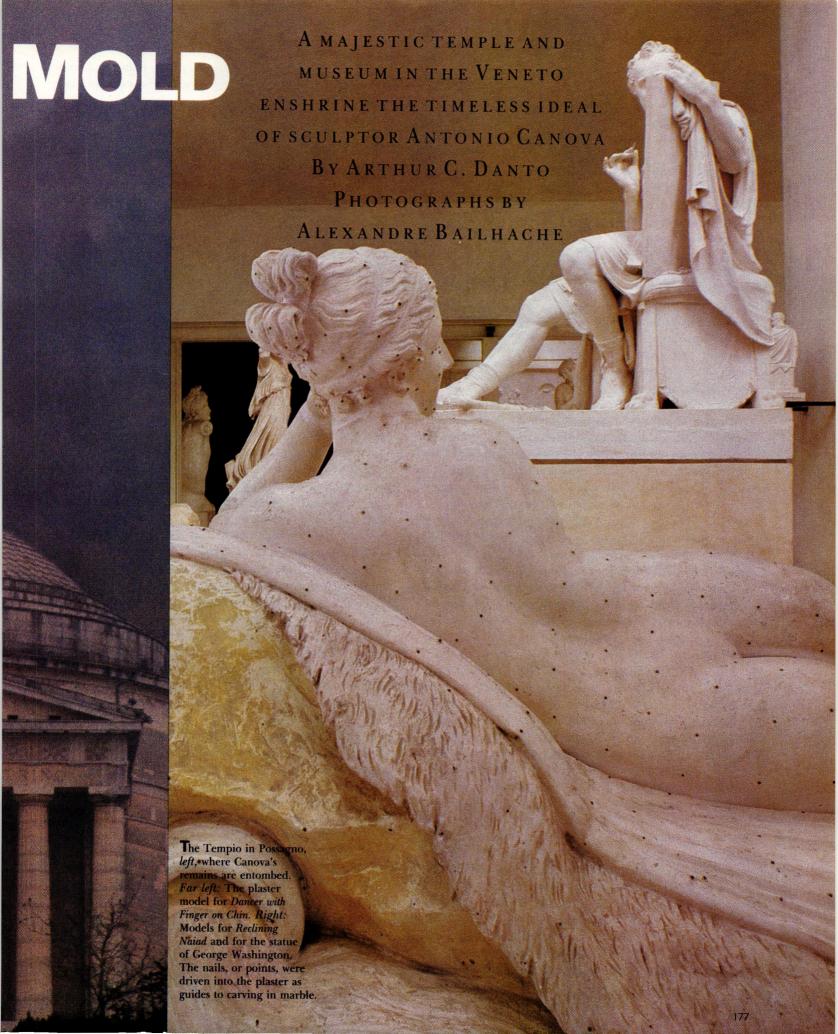
An Empire bed, left, dominates the master bedroom in Milan, which together with a dressing room, bathrooms, and Lorenzo's bedroom occupy the ground floor of an 18th-century building, separated from the living area by an outdoor corridor. Right: Miuccia on a stroll in the country. Far right: Lorenzo plays amid the forest of dining room chairs, covered in a red and white cotton, and a 19th-century Italian table.











THE WORKS OF Antonio Canova embodied to perfection an ideal of Classical beauty to which other artists only aspired. None of his contemporaries could touch him for the power, the clarity, the grace, and the purity of his forms. While they mimicked the outward forms of Greek sculpture, Canova found a way to carry forward its internal impulses: his masterworks radiate that "noble simplicity and calm grandeur" articulated by Winckelmann as the aesthetic imperative of an-



Paintings of Venus and busts by Canova in his house, above, which adjoins the Gipsoteca. Opposite above: Model for The Three Graces, commissioned by Josephine Bonaparte, who died before it was completed. The marble is in the Hermitage in Leningrad. Opposite below: Detail from the plaster original for Adonis Crowned by Venus. The model was never translated into marble and was spared the disfiguring points.

cient art and at the same time seem furiously alive. Pauline Bonaparte flaunts her bold breasts as Venus Vincitrice; his Cupid and Psyche are clasped in a fluttering eroticism so keen that Flaubert could not forbear kissing the marble maiden's armpit. Beyond that, Canova possessed a fierce virtuosity that seemed to transcend merely human limits. There was an affectionate legend that as a child he revealed his sculptural powers by shaping a lion out of butter, but in truth his facility as a carver was such that stone appeared to offer as little resistance to his hand as that most tractable of substances. And his productivity was tremendous: he completed 176 works, some of them as architecturally complex as the papal memorials to Clement XIII and Clement XIV in Rome or the profoundly moving funerary monument for the archduchess Maria Christina in Vienna. Canova's images are summations of the sensibility of his era and among the most vivid of any age.

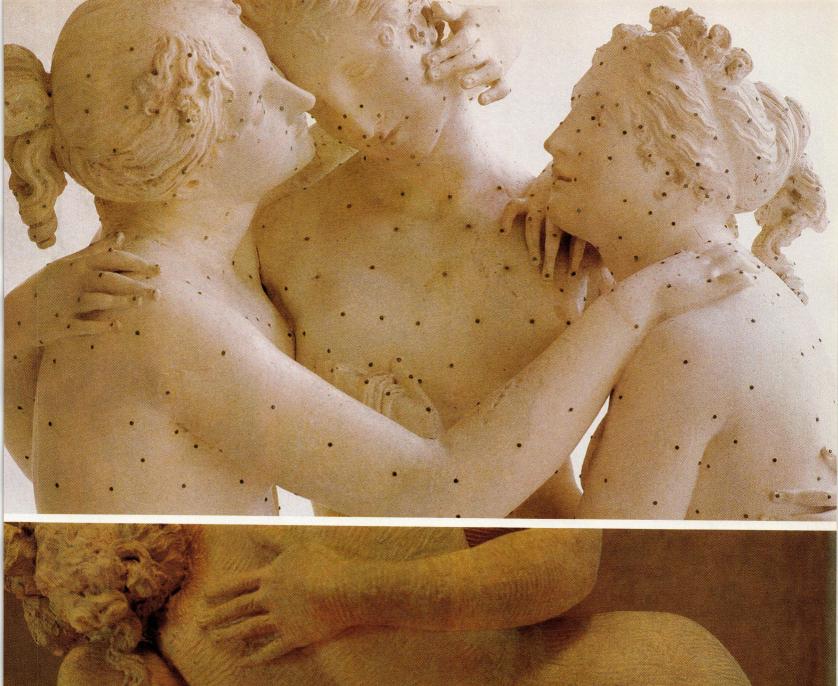
As he was the foremost artistic celebrity of his time, venerated as near to divinity, no single site seemed worthy of his entire mortal remains, and upon his death Canova's body underwent a romantic distribution. His heart lies in a special receptacle in the church of Santa Maria dei Frari in Venice; one of his cunning hands went, appropriately, to the Academy of Fine Arts in that city. The remainder was entombed in an exquisite church he designed in the form of a temple, set against the Dolomites above the tiny village of Possagno, where he was born in 1757. It is poetically fitting too, that Canova's house in Possagno and, in particular, a museum adjoining it should contain the mortal remains of his art, the sketches in clay, the studies in terra-cotta, and the working models in plaster that mark stages in the evolution toward the dazzle and polish of his finished work. The Tempio and the Gipsoteca, as these structures are respectively named, together compose a memorial portrait of his artistic personality. They bring us as close as possible to what it was like to have been Antonio Canova.

A Greek temple upon a height and a Classical edifice soli-

tary in a picturesque landscape are compelling metaphors for the Neoclassical mind. They define the respective essences of humankind and of nature, the one rational and ordered, the other romantic and wild. The temple itself need not resemble ancient paradigms with archaeological exactitude, and indeed Canova's temple amalgamates the face of the Parthenon and the body of the Pantheon, as if offering an architectural compromise for the squabble between Winckelmann

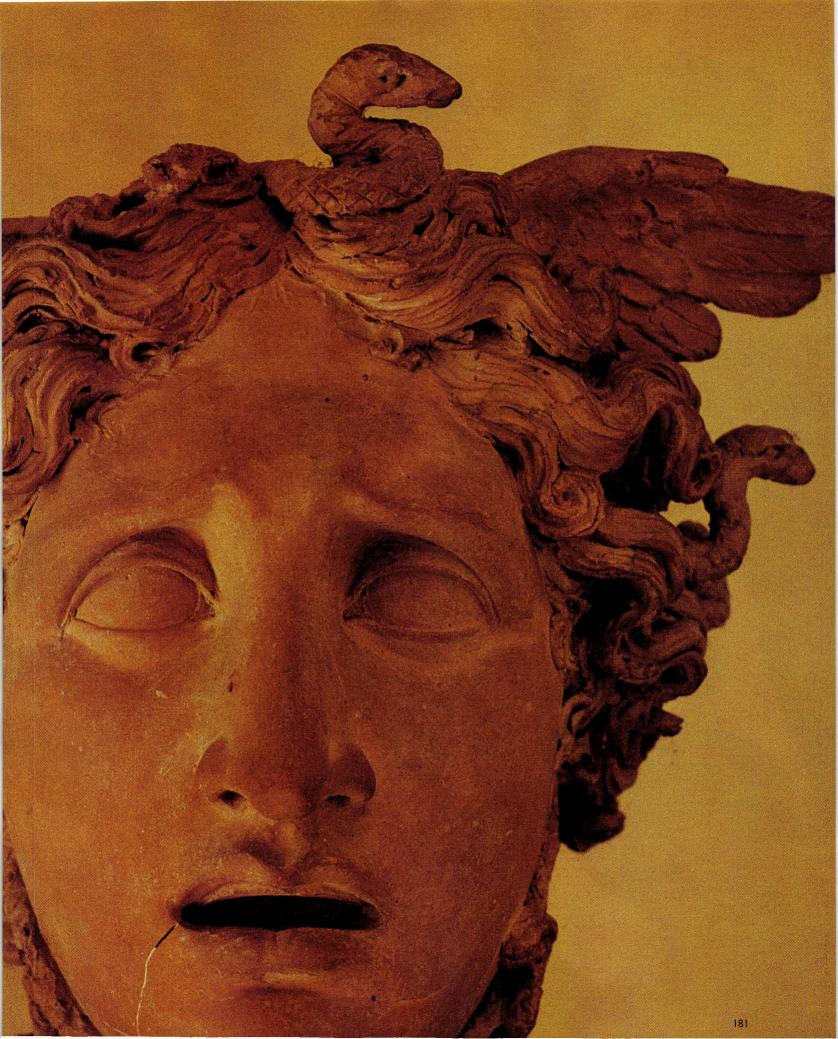
and Piranesi as to the artistic superiority of Greece or Rome. It is possible to surmise that Canova intended to fill the pediment with his own version of the marbles Lord Elgin carried to London, where Canova had gone to study them. But the Tempio's cornerstone was placed in 1819, when Canova was already mortally ill, and he achieved only seven metopes, of scenes from the Old and New Testaments, for the decoration of the frieze. The Tempio, part of which is still used as a church, is an opening into his values and his drives, as if it were an intimate journal in the medium of pillars and spaces and vistas.

This intimate, confessional tone is sustained in the museum with its population of bozzetti and working models, clay sketches that show the artist's inspiration in midflight, and finished gesso models poised for the transfer into marble. Here one gets a sense of his uncanny powers—and of his surprising limitations. There are enough paintings, for example, to demonstrate his incapacity to deal with the illusion of a third dimension or to bring life to paint with any of the shaping authority he commanded in summoning the very forms of life out of lumps of clay. There is a small terra-cotta Satyr and Nymph, passionately drawn up out of the material and given form with tiny strokes and touches in which the power and tenderness of his fingers remain visible, as if Canova were enacting the gestures of love he was also portraying. This pair of intensely interlocked lovers was never carried further, but he did execute a plaster model for another, calmer romantic union—Venus languishing with her head in Adonis's lap, reaching up to crown him with a garland he receives with one hand while he clasps her with the other. It is a beautiful interlacing of arms and bodies, a symbolic matrimony in the interchange of a wreath after consummation. Although the model was never translated into marble, for which all his work was intended, it was perhaps just as well, inasmuch as the working models that did become marble, like the enchanting Three Graces, are disfigured by the nail (Text continued on page 220)

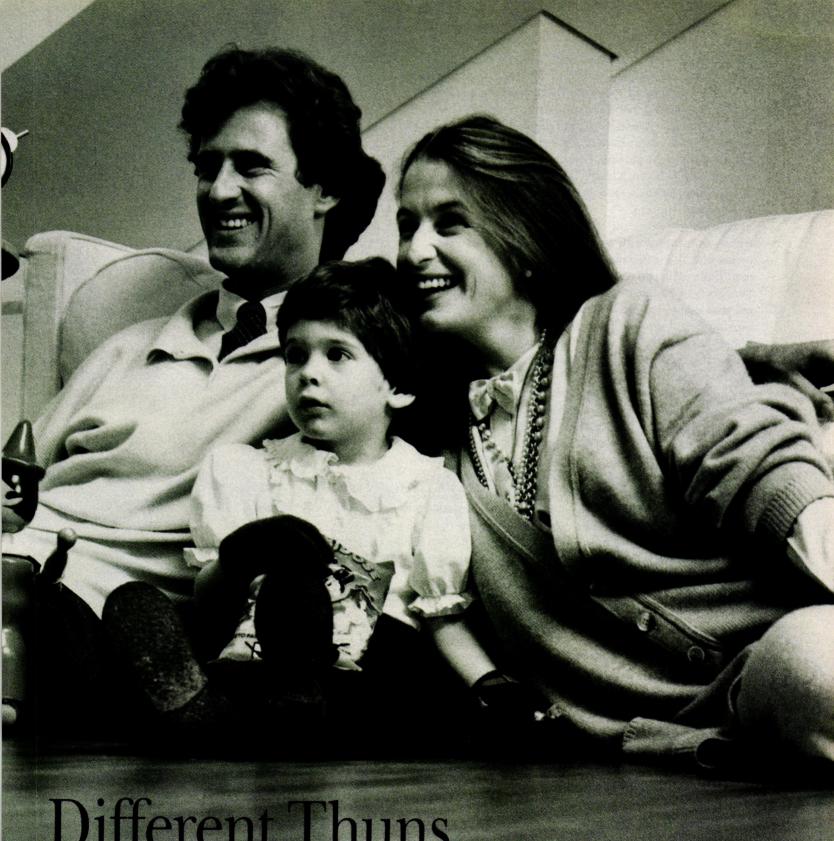












Different Thuns

Susanne and Matteo Thun mix two distinct sensibilities in their Milan penthouse—his love of white and her passion for color By Jan Burney Photographs by Alexandre Bailhache

A RCHITECT MATTEO THUN AND HIS FAMILY ARE A CASTing director's dream. Raised in the Italian city of Bolzano in the South Tyrol, "il conte" Matteo has the aristocratic
good looks of his noble Austrian forebears, and his elegant
wife, Susanne, is a slender Austrian blonde. Sitting together
on the huge white sofa in their Milanese apartment, their delightful three-year-old son, Constantin, between them and
Coco, the white Scottish terrier, at their feet, they are bathed
in sunshine from the terrace like the Holy Family in an Italian
Renaissance painting.

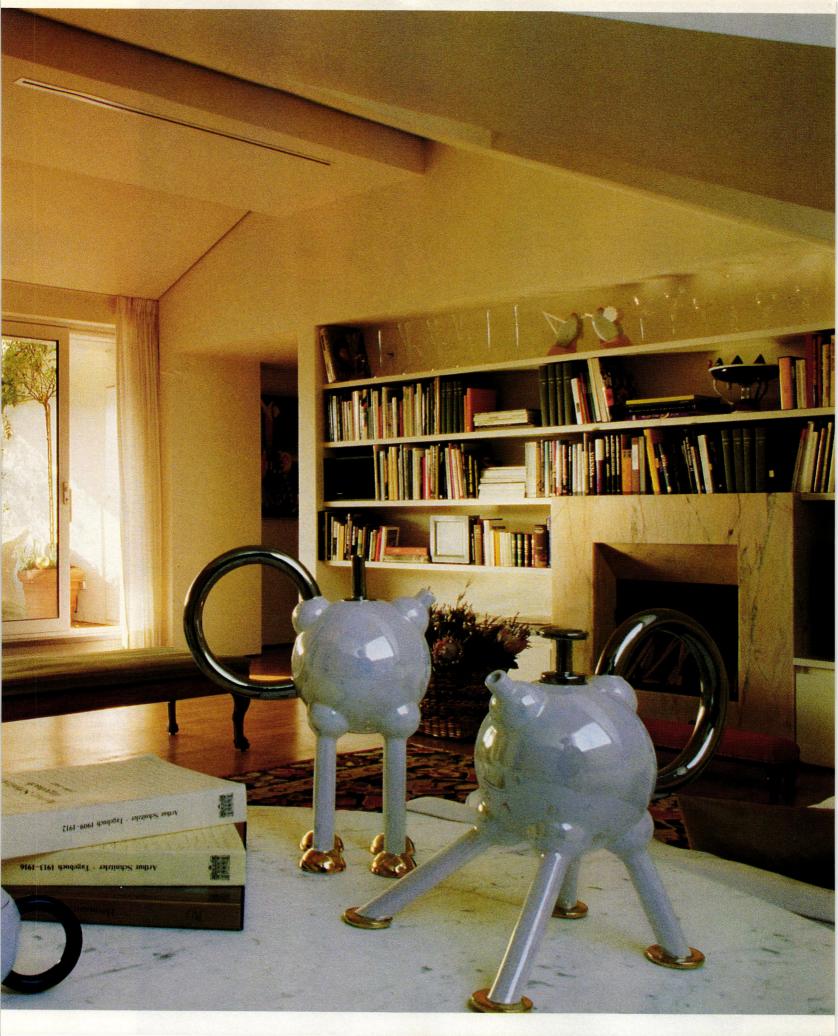
Thun might shrug off the comparison, but he admits to feeling an affinity with Leonardo da Vinci, whose experiments with flying machines inspired his own interest in human flight. His project for an architecture diploma at the University of Florence was a hang glider that he spent his final year designing and building; its acceptance by the jury was touch and go, but Thun finally emerged with highest honors. After a spell in a glider factory in Albuquerque and further architectural studies at UCLA, he returned to Italy in 1979 to work with the Milanese design guru and superstar Ettore Sottsass. Both were founding members of Memphis, the movement that exploded on the design world in 1981 and turned conventional notions of good taste upside down.

But Thun, the ascetic Austrian, grew slightly aloof from the volatile Memphis group's "red wine discussions" and philosophizing about design. He had his own aerial publicity company until 1982, and his continuing romance with flying affected his earthly love life: Susanne, as a young graphic designer, was recruited to paint the huge lettering for the ads that billowed from his glider over Milan. When the couple married in 1983, Susanne gave up her job as a stylist for Ital-

The terrace off the Thuns' living room, right, overlooks the Duomo. The view can also be savored from a sofa or an antique dormeuse. Matteo designed the coffeepots and sugar bowl; Susanne added the kilim. Below: Constantin perched on one of Matteo's Biedermeier chairs Susanne covered for her office in a Fonthill fabric of monkeys and parrots.









A turquoise chandelier, left, echoes the Olivetti telephone and Mondo chairs in the kitchen. Opposite above left: Bright color accents in the bedroom complement a nude by Ugo Celada da Virgilio. Opposite right: Beneath a lithograph by Frank Stella, a silver fruit dish by Memphis cofounder Ettore Sottsass sits on a glass shelf designed by Thun.



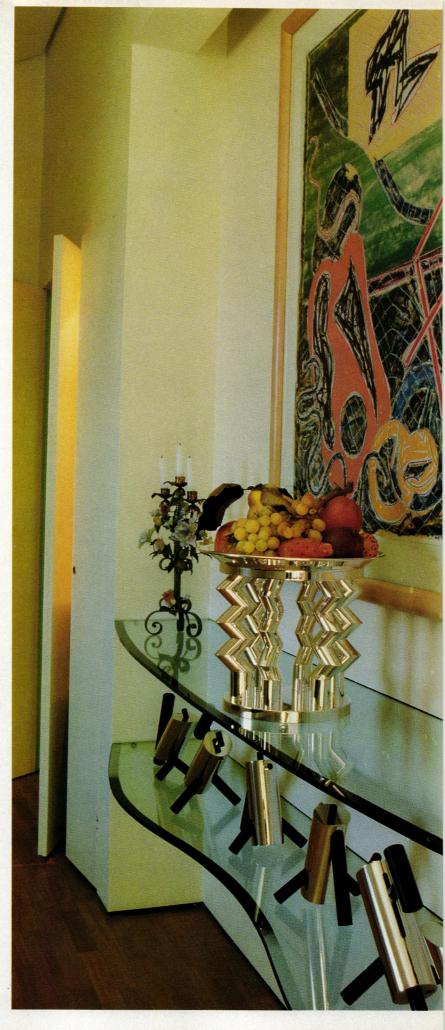
Susanne introduced a touch of extravagance— the turquoise chandelier to go with the turquoise phone

ian *Vogue* to work alongside her husband. Thun set up his own studio and now employs twenty people, working for international clients on commissions ranging from industrial complexes to furniture and ceramics, glassware for Campari, and watches for Bulgari and Swatch.

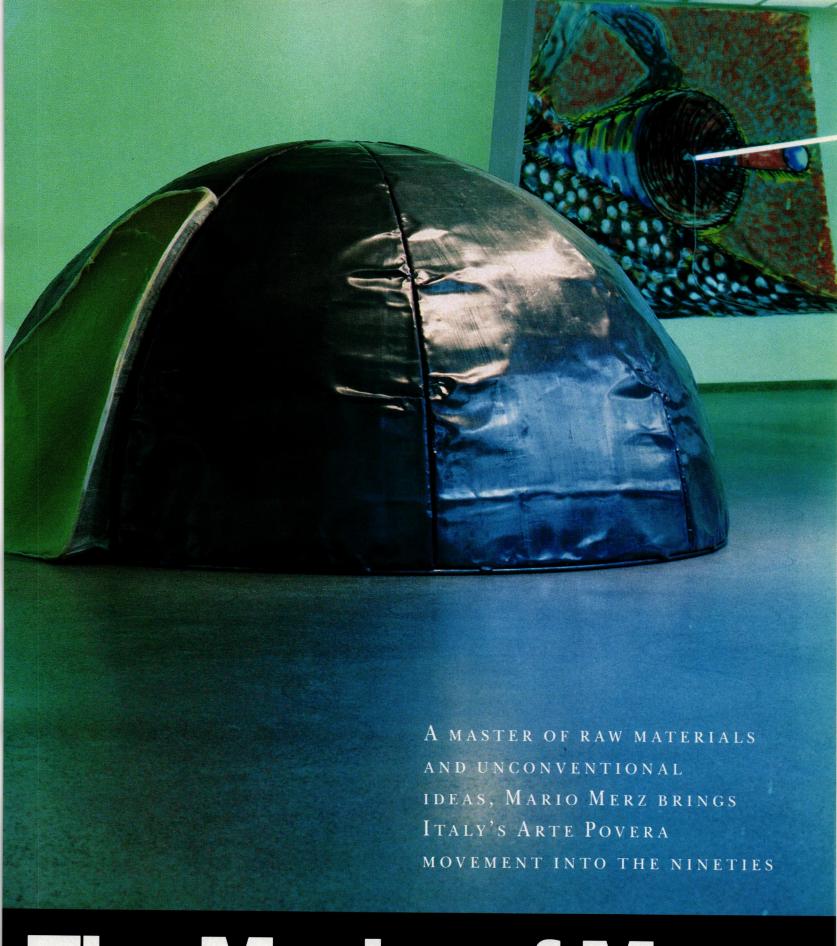
When Thun found their apartment in the tranquil and increasingly fashionable Brera district, it was a derelict roof space. But he decided they had to have it when he looked out of a tiny window and discovered a breathtaking view to the Duomo, the spectacular Gothic cathedral in the center of the city. "Symbols like the Duomo give Milan its urban character," says Thun. "They provide the emotional impact and awareness of the city for its inhabitants." The couple bought the attic and the floor below and lived downstairs while the roof was removed and the entire top floor was rebuilt.

Now the view of the Duomo can be savored from a spacious terrace off the Thuns' living area which becomes another room in the summer. Its wood floor is kind to bare feet, and a canvas awning brings welcome shade at the press of a button. Matteo's resistance to prettifying the terrace with furniture and greenery has been gently eroded by Susanne's cultivation of her olive, lemon, and camellia trees, shrubs on the parapet, and a jasmine bush whose perfume floats into their bedroom in the summer. She has also managed to introduce a reproduction marble table and a pink marble fountain designed by Matteo for Up & Up; its tinkling cascade reminds her of the Austrian mountains as she lies in her city bed.

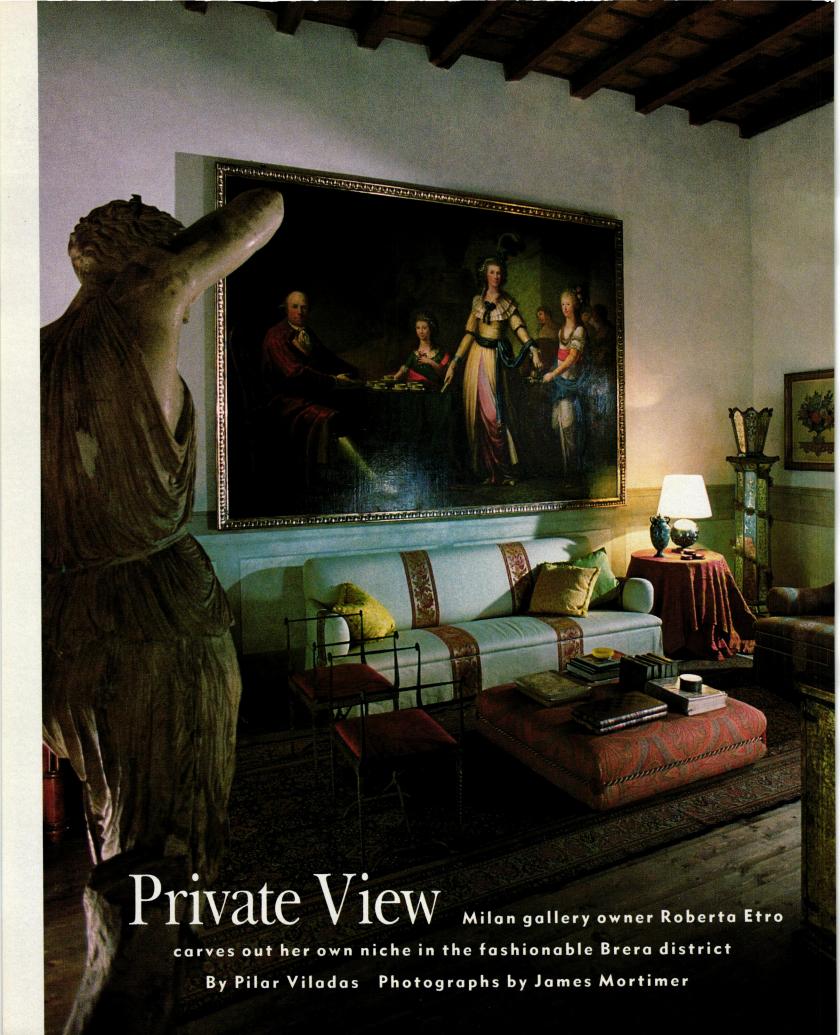
With the assistance of the young architect Martino Ferrari, Thun wanted to create a (Text continued on page 222)







The Merits of Merz









OBERTA ETRO LEADS A DOUBLE \mathbf{K} life—domestically, that is. As the wife of Gimmo Etro, head of the familyowned fabric and accessories company Etro, she inhabits a spacious apartment near the center of Milan which is very much a product of her husband's eye, filled with Art Deco furniture and hung with paintings by Giorgio de Chirico and the Futurists. But as an art dealer specializing in European paintings of the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, Etro rules a world of her own. And, modern woman that she is, she went Virginia Woolf one better and got a house of her own. Mind you, it's only a home away from home-a gallery annex and guesthouse—but it's as lovingly decorated and as charming as any dream house.

It was no one else's idea of a dream

house when Etro found it several years ago. Built in the eighteenth century, the house was originally part of a convent and later became a workshop in which decorative plaster was made. But it was in dire need of restoration and had been on the market for two years when Etro bought it. "No one saw the possibilities," she recalls. "I saw that the structure was basically good, but it needed a new roof and basement."

Such needs met, Etro turned her considerable energies to making magic. With the assistance of Milanese architect Piero Castellini and painters Santino Croci and Valeriano Dalzini, she added wainscoting and moldings, both real and trompe l'oeil, to various rooms in order to give them a more domestic scale. Decorating the house was obvious-

ly a pleasure for Etro, whose interest in furniture dates to the days when she was raising four children and collecting purely for enjoyment, for herself as well as friends. Most of the pieces, which tend to be simple and clean-lined, are nineteenth century, and all of the upholstery fabrics are antique. "I don't like 'restored' things," she emphasizes, which may be why the house appears so enchantingly lost in time.

Discovering unknown or forgotten painters gives the dealer particular satisfaction, and that same taste for the out-of-the-way permeates her little dream house. From the decorative plaster fragments that adorn the wall of the entry—they came with the house—to the array of Murano and Bristol glass walking sticks on a living room console, Etro's

A taste for the



knack for accenting sparely furnished rooms with idiosyncratic collections delights the eye. In the kitchen an assemblage of food paintings represents "only what I like to eat," a rule that reflects Etro's general approach to decorating—she isn't out to make any grand statement. Each room, she says, contains "just a few important things. The rest is only what I like, not valuable."

This combination of austerity and indulgence has produced a house that is both effortlessly elegant and seductively warm. From the moment you enter its hallway cum architectural plaster museum, you never want to leave. The timber-ceilinged ground-floor rooms surrounding an intimate courtyard with its own fig tree and grape arbor are spacious but comfortable; between the guest room and the bathroom Etro added a tiled Turkish bath. At the top of a narrow staircase lined with anatomical drawings, a second bedroom opens onto its own small terrace.

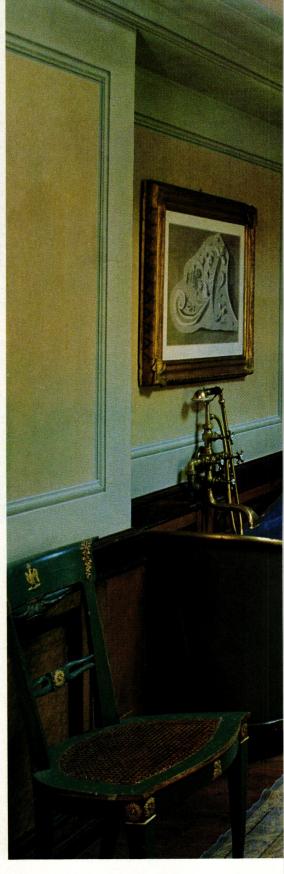
A room off the living room serves as a gallery annex and archive. Here, before and after exhibitions, paintings can be found leaning three or four deep against the walls, piled up against the Louis XVI wooden mantelpiece, and lying on top of the nineteenth-century Italian marquetry table, creating a workaday clutter in contrast to the or-

derly calm of the rest of the house. As one would expect, artworks come and go. Yet one remains—a flower painting by the English artist Walter G. Sanders. Etro loved the picture, but she is, after all, an art dealer, and someone wanted to buy it. When she had the picture cleaned, a red elephant emerged from the accumulated grime. Etro took the painted pachyderm as a sign—sure enough, the buyer had a sudden change of heart, and Etro bought back the painting, vowing never to part with it again.

Historically, Etro has had no such sentimental attachments to houses. She's owned several, but whenever she finishes decorating one, "that's it," she says. "I lose interest." The little house in Milan, however, seems to have curbed its owner's domestic wanderlust: "I don't know what I'll do with this house, but I want to keep it." What looked to others like a white elephant has emerged as a red one for Roberta Etro.

Editor: Deborah Webster

An English wood and cane lounge chair and a Charles X metal bathtub are among the treasures found in the bathroom, right, which opens onto a small courtyard. Above: In the bedroom a 19th-century French lamp on an English desk of the same period illuminates a portrait by Gerald Kelly. The fireplace is flanked by a shagreen chair from the 1940s and two Genovese cane chairs.



out-of-the-way characterizes Etro's dream house as well as her career

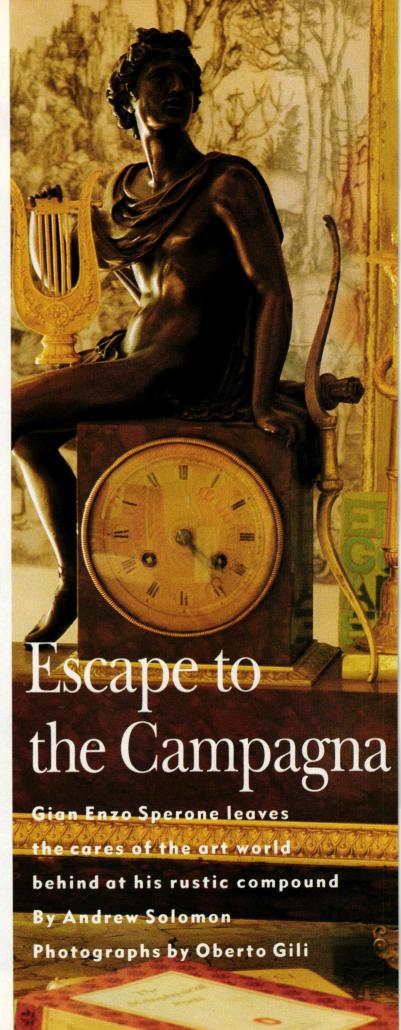


BOUT AN HOUR OUTSIDE ROME IN THE TINY VILLAGE OF A Filacciano sits the crumbling palace of the principi del Drago, and about five minutes farther, on the crest of a small hill, is a lodge built in 1910 so that the Drago children might sleep in the countryside when the fullness of Roman summer makes any urban dwelling a prison. Here they would come for days at a time to a building of noble simplicity, its walls a bricky pink, its roof tiled, its gardens surrounding the ancient fountains for which the property is called La Fontanella. At the front of the house the ground drops sharply and there is the infinite vista of a valley—fields of green intercepted by the occasional turns of the Tiber and the villages along its treelined banks. Behind the old house are two more, built over the past several years. Both share the miniature purity of the first one, the sympathy with the landscape, the elegant bearing of houses built as respites from other, busier houses.

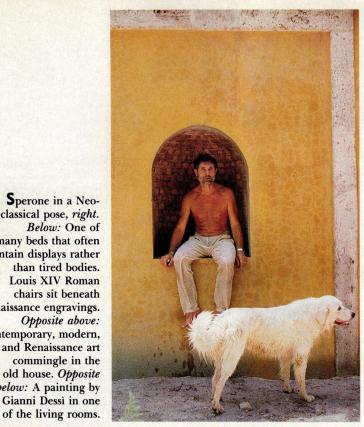
"Whenever the current prince comes to visit," laughs Gian Enzo Sperone, the owner of La Fontanella, "he shakes his head and wonders how he could have sold me this land. But it was in fact sold out of his family years ago, and I bought it from someone else altogether." Sperone is the director of the Sperone Gallery in Rome and a partner in Sperone Westwater in New York. He shows such artists as Andy Warhol, Cy Twombly, Francesco Clemente, Julian Schnabel, and Bruce Nauman. But he subscribes to neither the slickness nor the pessimism of contemporary art and has none of that dread gallerist's quality of the racketeer. When I arrived at La Fontanella, Sperone, dressed in plus fours and a tweed jacket, was working on a decaying stone wall at the periphery of his land. He came out of a mass of shrubbery, his neatly trimmed beard and hair wet from the morning fog, with a pack of white dogs of different breeds barking and rushing about him, some leaping up to place their paws on his shoulders and then on mine, others content to yap about our heels.

We went into the first of the three houses. Sperone explained to me that he has built the others in part to hold his ever-increasing collection of furniture and objects but also for everyone to have a place to go at any time. "Perhaps one day I feel like sleeping at the top of the hill and another like being down below. Perhaps one morning the sun seems too bright in the old house and the light is more beautiful in the new one. Perhaps I need for a few hours to go where the children and the dogs will not come and interrupt me. Or perhaps I have friends staying and want to give them a place of their own. That is why I have three houses here." We drank clear tea in which there floated nearly transparent slices of a lemon grown nearby and ate slices of a tart cooked that morning and still warm in its pan.

I had assumed that Sperone's house would be filled with work by the artists he shows, furnished with modern chairs and sofas, and lit by halogen lamps. I could not have been more wrong. Indian miniatures, old-master engravings, fragments of ancient wall paintings, and delicate nineteenth-century watercolors hang at close quarters on the walls, and though there are contemporary works by Mimmo Paladino,







Sperone in a Neoclassical pose, right. Below: One of many beds that often contain displays rather than tired bodies. Louis XIV Roman chairs sit beneath Renaissance engravings. Opposite above: Contemporary, modern, and Renaissance art commingle in the old house. Opposite below: A painting by

of the living rooms.

Michelangelo Pistoletto, Gianni Dessì, they seem to be only a component of a plausibly transtemporal admixture. "If you know the artists as I know the artists whose work I show and if you understand their work as I think I understand it, then to live with their work constantly by you is to live in a sort of suspended anxiety. It is not that I do not love their work, that I do not want it near me. It is not even that I do not collect it, but I do not want it always in my home. And then too, these are houses of small proportions with small walls. A single work by Schnabel would take up the entire wall of this room."

The houses are filled with a diversity of items such as can hardly be catalogued. There are beds everywhere, some of them campaign beds, many of them from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. They are canopied in white cotton so soft it can barely be distinguished from the air around it, or in bolder weaves whose bright colors seem to glow against the textured dullness of cast-iron frames. "Beds are where we speak to one another and where we dream," says Sperone. "They are where life unfolds. If I could, I would have a bed in every room." Other furnishings are frequently Empire or late eighteenth century. Everywhere there are clocks, some dials held by fantastical ormolu figures from





"Beds are where we speak to one another—they are where life unfolds"

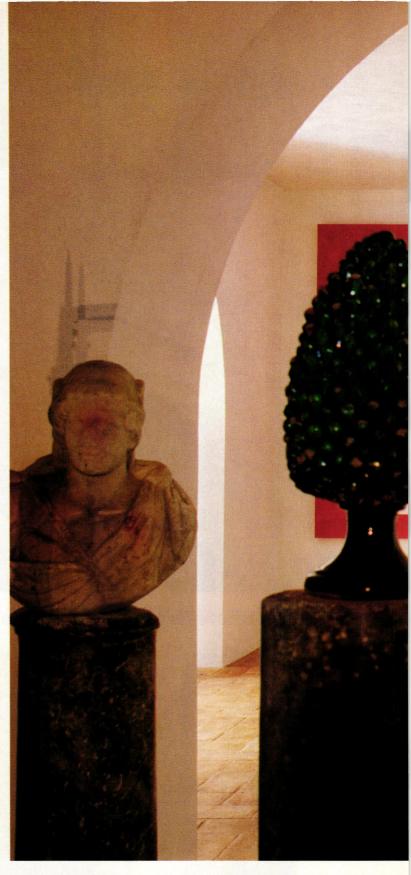


myth, others in simple carriage cases, all of them forever chiming. Fragments of Roman sculpture are balanced on inlaid tables beside modern upholstered sofas with big comfortable cushions, and Oriental vases sit on old tables with simple turned legs. Fine jars of Dutch porcelain are side by side with Tuscan cupboards and wardrobes of rough-hewn golden wood.

These objects in unlikely juxtaposition seem as though they had been made for just such placement; each acquires a vividness of form as it lies beside its neighbors. The rooms are all tiled in antique terra-cotta, the walls all simply whitewashed, the ceilings all of local hand-cut wood with beams made of tree trunks. The light is uniform and pale and clear. In it the objects are not like relics—oddments obfuscated by the intervention of years—but like living things aglow with unostentatious beauty and usefulness. Here is what might happen if history itself were to bathe in the fountain of youth, if what has already been could be as urgent as what is now. There is nothing fussy about the arrangements of La Fontanella; the houses are held together only by Sperone's palpable integrity and unaffected refinement.

Sperone and I walked across the property breathing the fine air of the hills. We went down the stairs of the orangery to a cellar where some of his modern works lean against walls, Warhol's Jackie Kennedy beside Joseph Kosuth's typewriter images of words beside yet another cast-iron bed on which to lie and think of modern art. Afterwards we went back to the first and oldest house and had lunch with Patrizia Sperone, Gian Enzo's wife, and Nana Barbiellini, a childhood friend. We ate pasta and salad and cheese, simple dishes made with local ingredients by peasant women from the village, and we drank a young red wine with a light fruity bouquet. Patrizia Sperone told stories, and we all laughed about the idea of beauty and the struggle we undergo to locate it in ourselves and in what is around us. We laughed to think that there is no comedy greater than the way sophistication ends up as a search for world enough and time, the greatest luxuries of all. From where I sat, laughing too, I could see a small clock, an Empire sideboard, a cluster of late grapes still hanging on the trellis outside, and the Tiber winding its ancient course through the valley. Editor: Beatrice Monti della Corte

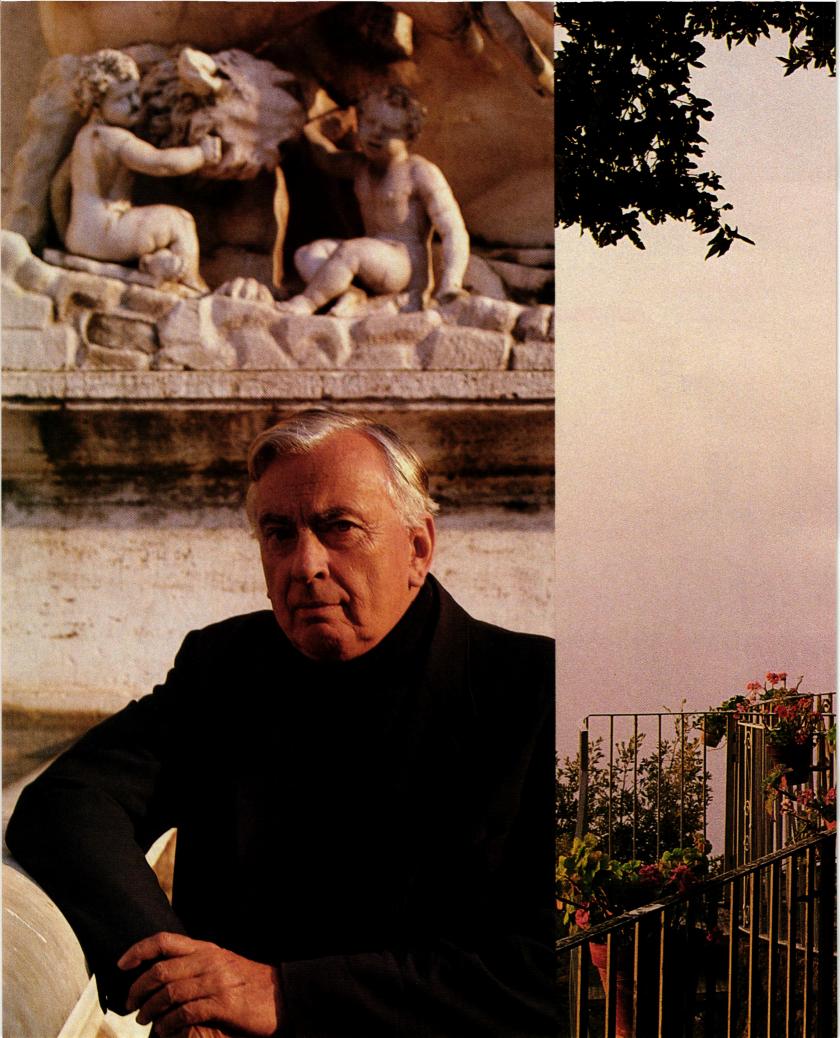


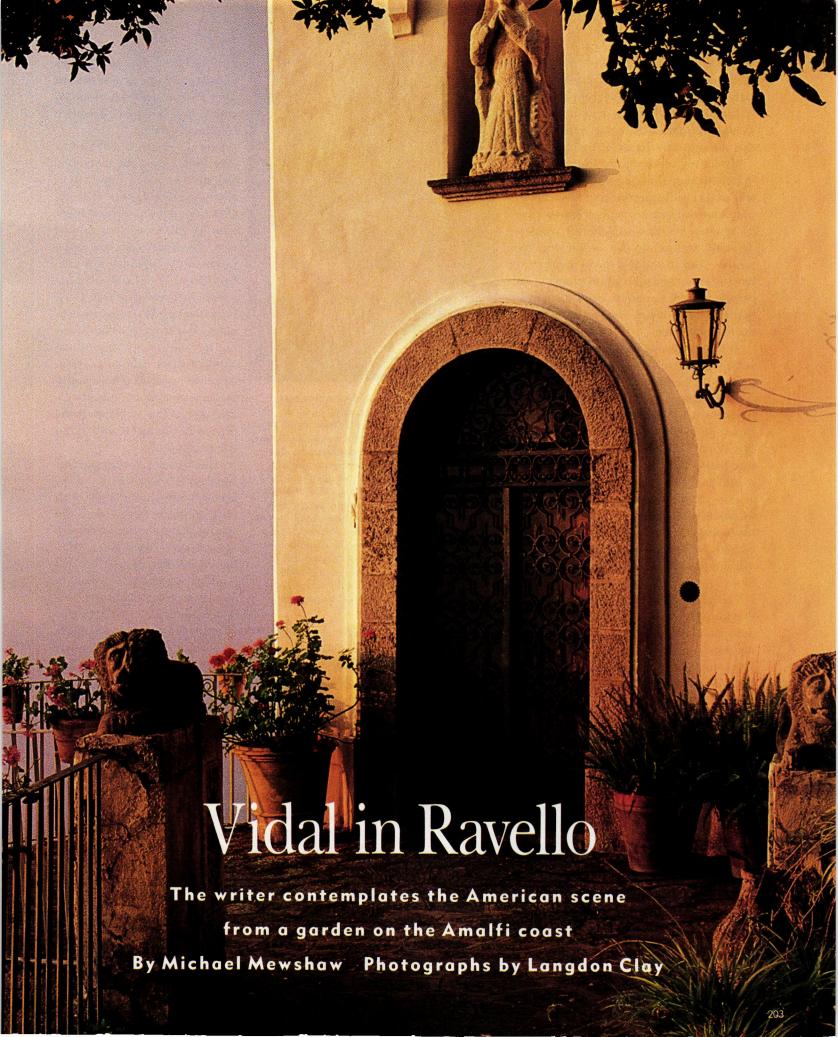


Here is what might happen



if history itself bathed in the fountain of youth





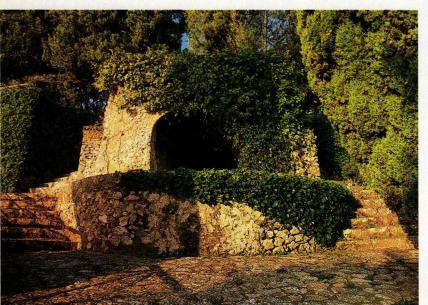
FOR MANY PEOPLE THE FACT THAT GORE Vidal lives in Italy has always seemed rather puzzling, perhaps even suspicious. After all, the skewed reasoning runs, shouldn't America's foremost historical novelist and cultural critic live in his native land?

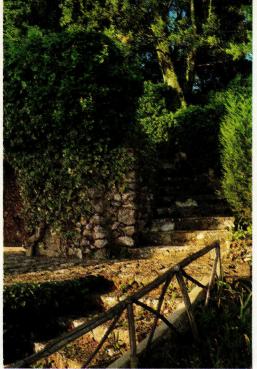
"To me it's a nonsubject," Vidal responds. "I have to keep thinking up something that will entertain interviewers. They always want something dramatic. You know, 'Expatriate turns his back on America yet paradoxically writes about it. What does this mean?' Well, it doesn't mean anything. I have never turned my back on America." Vidal often visits the States, still maintains a house in Los Angeles, and fervently follows the national scene.

As for why he spends much of the year in Italy, that's scarcely a conundrum. One has only to visit his estate in Ravello on the Amal-

fi coast south of Naples to realize that the answer to the supposed mystery of his exile is another question: given the choice, who in his right mind wouldn't prefer to live in paradise? Vidal's Eden is perched on more than seven acres of terraced land with heart-stopping views of Monte Lattari, the cobalt blue Mediterranean, and a sky that on clear days shows a paler shade of blue best described as Della Robbia. The whitewashed house clings to a cliff in a fashion that fully explains its name, La Rondinaia, Italian for the Swallow's Nest. Nobody believed it could be built, and in stormy weather one still almost expects it to shake loose and slide a thousand feet down to the shore.

The gardens are no less remarkable than the house, and they provide ample evidence of the taste, imagination, and determination that Vidal and his longtime companion, Howard Austen, devote to every venture they undertake. The estate originally belonged to Lucy Beckett, the daughter of Lord Grimthorpe, an Englishman who at the turn of the century built the famous Villa Cimbrone, which lies just behind





Stone steps with a rustic railing, above, climb a terraced hillside above Vidal's house, La Rondinaia. Behind the embankment, another staircase rises to a cypress allée across the top of the promontory. Below left: The grotto where garden tools are stored commands a view out to sea. Preceding pages: Vidal on the Campidoglio in Rome. Geraniums line the approach to La Rondinaia, where locally carved stone lions guard the doorway.

La Rondinaia. The two parcels of land were one property until Lucy took over the lower ledge, which had been her favorite childhood garden.

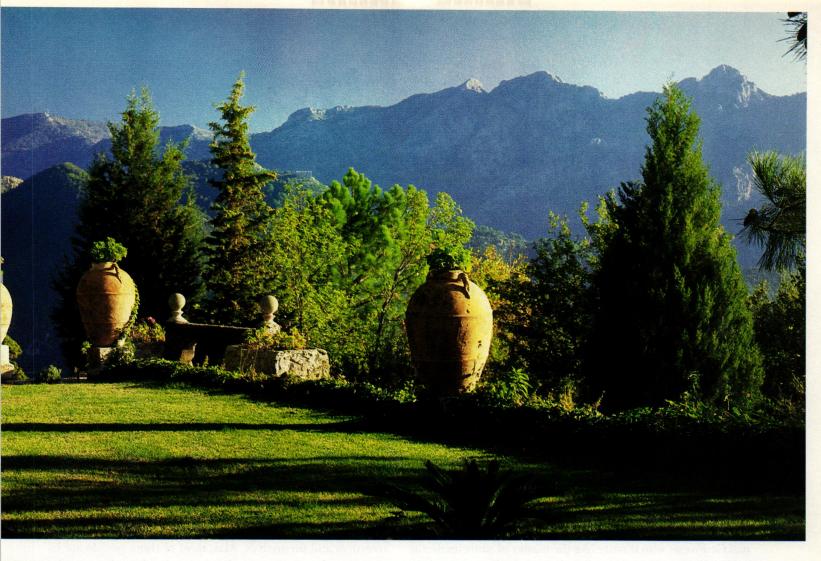
Ever the eager student of history, Vidal explains that Lord Grimthorpe was a knowledgeable amateur botanist. "He traveled around the world and spent a lot of money on that mountain," says Vidal, referring to the promontory on which the Villa Cimbrone and La Rondinaia stand. At great expense, Lord Grimthorpe brought in new plants and trees, constantly trying to redefine the traditional concept of an Italian garden. Not all of his imports and experiments survived, but he gradually discovered that cypress, stone pine, and ilex grow well along the Amalfi coast.

"He created a green garden," Vidal says, "which was one of the best of its kind in the world, with long allées of huge trees." So spectacular was it that word kept spreading and spreading. "William Randolph Hearst had his gardens at San Simeon done in imitation of the Cimbrone," Vidal claims. "This gives my gar-

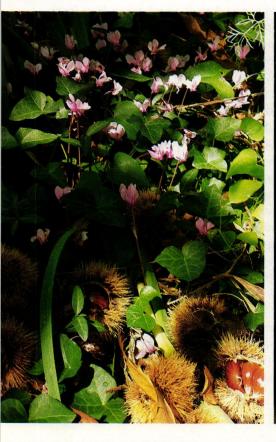
den an American connection." And of course it segues nicely into his new novel, *Hollywood*, in which Hearst plays a meaty role. Vidal's *Hollywood* is the latest in the cycle of historical novels that began with *Burr* and continued through *Lincoln*, 1876, *Empire*, and *Washington*, *D.C.*

From Lord Grimthorpe's original garden La Rondinaia inherited two majestic colonnades of cypresses—one stretching more than a quarter of a mile from the entrance gate to the house, the other descending a steep hillside to an ornamental arch. There were also olive groves; copses of lemon, fig, walnut, and chestnut trees; wild thyme, rosemary, ruchetta (an indigenous arugula), and broom; and several arbors overgrown with wisteria and bougainvillea. But when Vidal bought the property in 1972, there was little else to provide cultivated bloom except for some roses, a few amphoras planted with geraniums, and a lonely border of annuals.

Neither Lord Grimthorpe nor his daughter would recognize the place today. One terrace has been given over to a fifty-foot swimming pool, a large patio, and a pool house complete with sauna. More important, two and a half acres are now under meticulous (Text continued on page 220)



Asked what he does in the garden, Vidal says, "I think—or think I'm thinking"





In the only formal area of the garden, above, amphoras hold geraniums at the edge of a grassy poolside plateau overlooking Monte Lattari. Ball finials ornament a staircase down to the rose beds. Far left: Naturalized miniature cyclamen bloom among fallen chestnuts, which are left amid the ivy as a natural mulch. Left: Cypresses planted in the 19th century by Lord Grimthorpe border steps cascading from the grotto toward the sea.

Maestro Mongiardino

FOR FOUR DECADES THE ITALIAN DECORATOR HAS SET THE STANDARD FOR GRANDEUR, CRAFTSMANSHIP, AND ROMANTIC VISION IN THE WORLD'S GREAT HOUSES

BY JOHN RICHARDSON

RENZO MONGIARDINO IS THE MOST DRAMATIC AND ORIGINAL, imaginative and ingenious designer of our day. He is also the most versatile. Long before rivals catch up with him, he reenters his time capsule and speeds off on yet another expedition to capture what he calls the "future in the past." Unlike designers who cultivate a personalized style doomed to date, Mongiardino abominates fashionable clichés. He prides himself on being protean. To show us his full gamut, he has picked out rooms that represent successive decades of his career. But first a few words about the work of this gentle, genial Genovese, who is more like the master of some medieval guild than the most sought after designer in the world today.

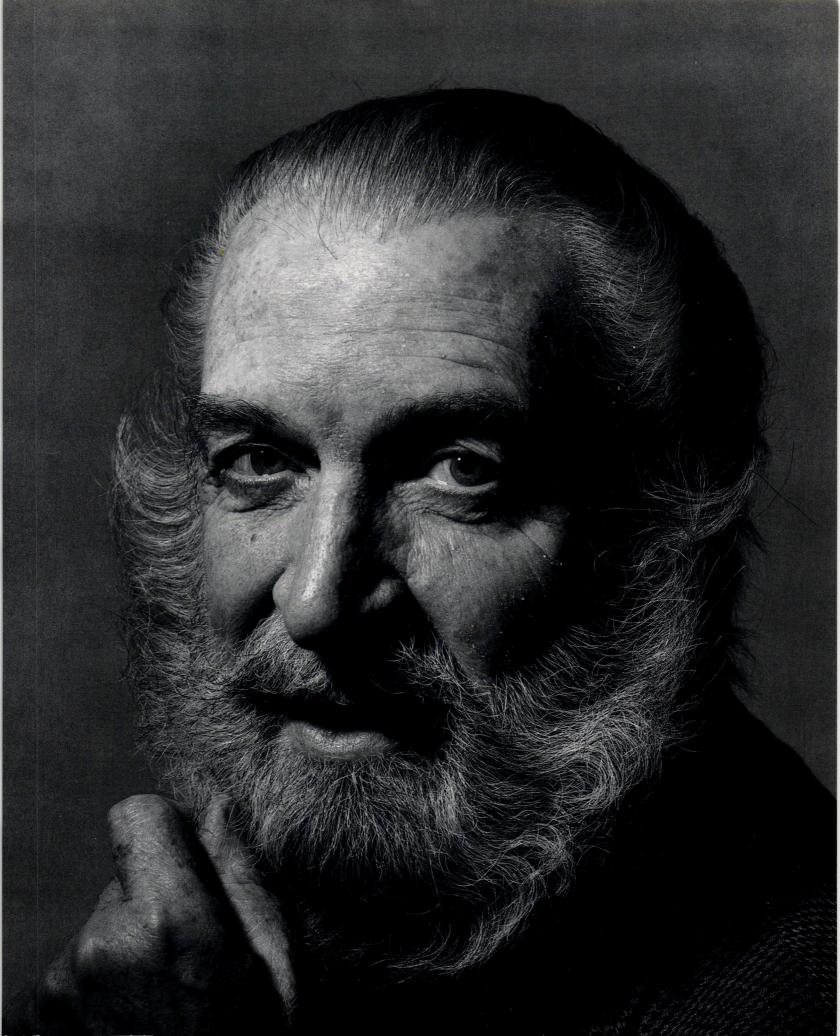
Mongiardino was still a student—of architecture, theater decor, and interior design—when he received his first commission. It was for his sister's apartment in Portofino-"like a little theater," he recalls, "trompe l'oeil ruins on the walls, a few souvenirs of Dali and Chirico"—and it confirmed him in his vocation. Further confirmation came from his highly original and successful thesis for the University of Milan: an architectural model of an elaborate folly complete with a Baroque fireplace fashioned out of huge rocks like a grotto. Paradoxically it doubled as a cascade—shades of Bomarzo, the surrealist cinquecento garden in Lazio; shades, too, of architect Emilio Terry, the Baroque Modernist of the 1930s and the only forebear Mongiardino avows. The folly was also embellished with murals by Lila de Nobili, a fellow student who became a celebrated theater designer and continues to be Mongiardino's closest friend and collaborator.

Mongiardino's imaginative sense of drama and atmosphere ensured his instant success as a designer for operas and films. His *Tosca* (with Callas) at Covent Garden in 1964 was a sensation. Likewise his *Ballo in maschera* for La Scala. His sets for *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* at Stratford-upon-Avon and Zeffirelli's films of *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Taming of the Shrew* won him even wider acclaim. But much as he enjoyed doing decors, he had always yearned to create "ambiances for

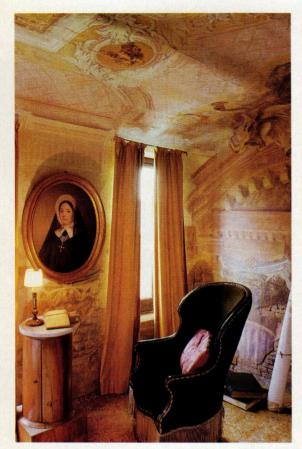
people" (his euphemism for the hateful word "decorating"). His breakthrough into interior design came in the early 1950s when his friends Count and Countess Brandolini asked him to remodel their Paris apartment. It was a triumph, and he went on to redecorate rooms in their Venetian palazzo and country house in the Veneto, as well as residences in Turin and Villar Perosa for Gianni Agnelli, Countess Brandolini's brother. In no time most of Europe's merchant princes—Rothschild, Thyssen, and Niarchos among them—were begging Mongiardino to come up with settings worthy of their treasures and themselves. Alas, most of those people are so obsessive about privacy and security that few photographs have been taken.

The designer's first major American job was a New York house for Jack and Drue Heinz, begun in 1976. This involved no new approach, Mongiardino says. "Working for a client in New York is no different from working for someone in Turin or London. For me it's the places that are different, not the people." The rooms that he contrived for the Heinzes and their dazzling collections of paintings and friends are consummately stylish and cozy. If guests always have such a civilized time in the Heinzes' dining room, it is due to the atmosphere of relaxed humanism that the designer and hostess have evoked. Mongiardino is now a regular visitor to New York and, with the support of his U.S. assistant, Gaser Tabakoglu, currently at work on more new projects than ever.

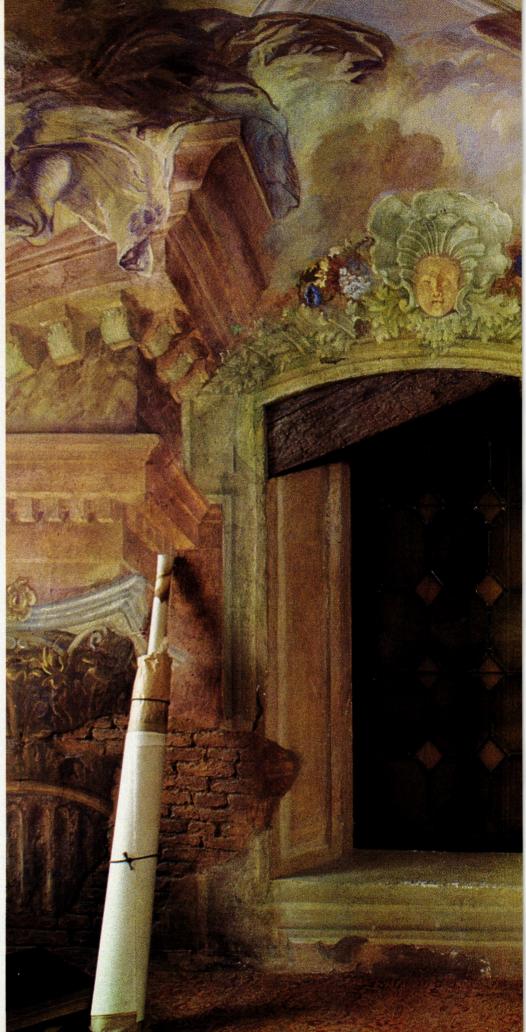
To match the magnificence of his clients' possessions, Mongiardino is often obliged to come up with overwhelmingly lavish effects. However, you can be sure that fastidiousness will always win out over grandiloquence. Remember, too, that he is a stage designer at heart and would as soon do up Cinderella's shabby kitchen as Prince Charming's glittering ballroom. His own apartment in Milan is a case in point. He has been at pains to conjure up an ambiance—decor is much too fancy a word—that an Italian connoisseur of good family and adequate means would have enjoyed (*Text continued on page 224*)



Mongiardino 1950s



IN THE MID 1950S, MONGIARDINO'S friend and patron Count Brandolini let him have a pied-à-terre—a few small vaulted attics in his palazzo on the Grand Canal. A less imaginative designer would have worked within the limitations of the space. Not Mongiardino. He fantasized that his apartment was a mezzanine formed when another floor was inserted under the ceiling of a Baroque church. To further this illusion, he had Lila de Nobili and Enrico Bertolucci fresco the ceiling and embellish the walls with gigantic entablatures, pediments, and the putti-surrounded pinnacles of two great altars. The distorted scale of these relatively cramped quarters plays havoc with one's sense of place and period. The canal might well have engulfed the rest of the palace, and the benign incumbent could be a family chaplain ready to absolve us for everything except a lack of fantasy.





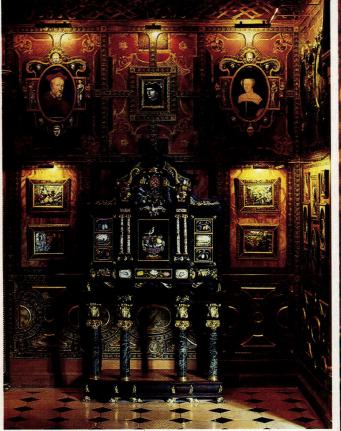


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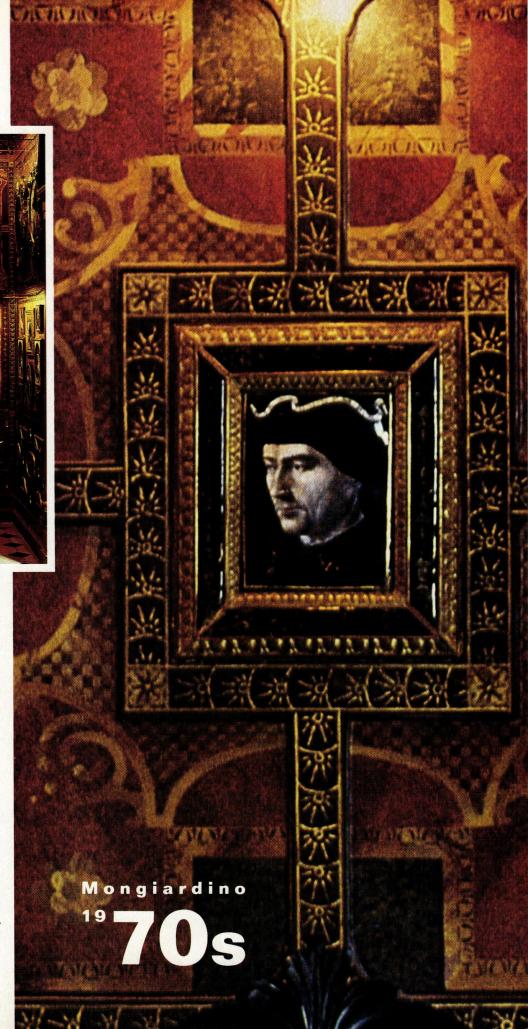
are still copying the look.

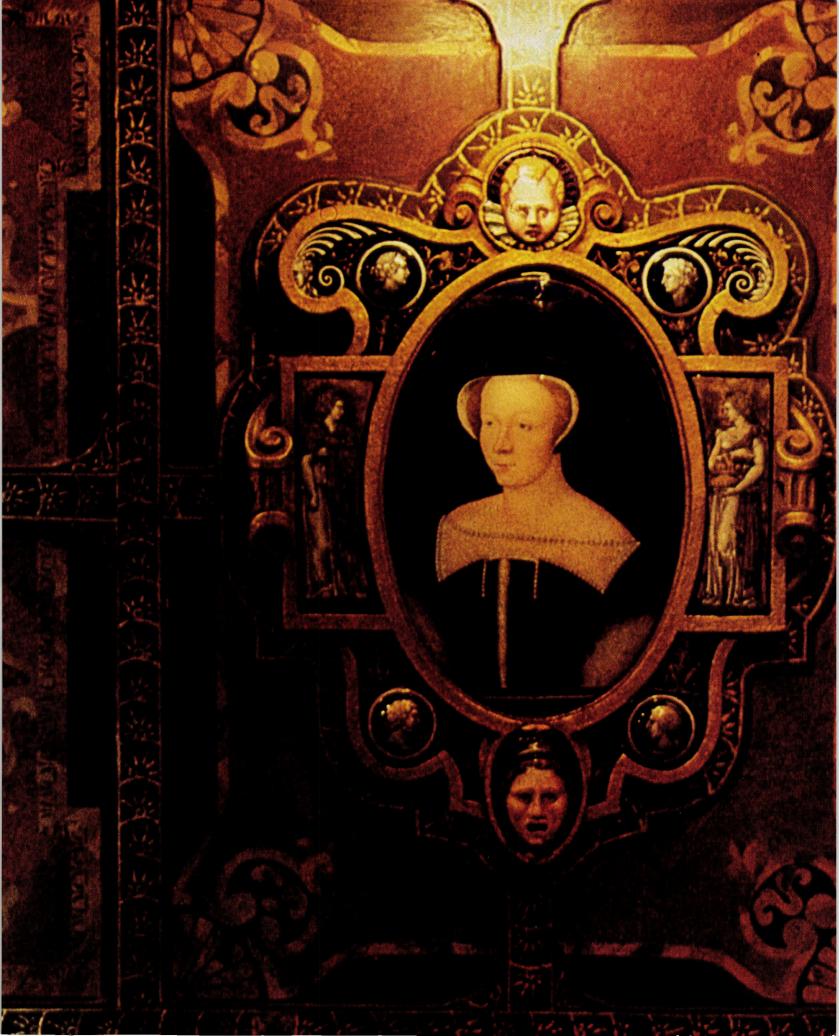
mezzari (hand-blocked quilts) on the



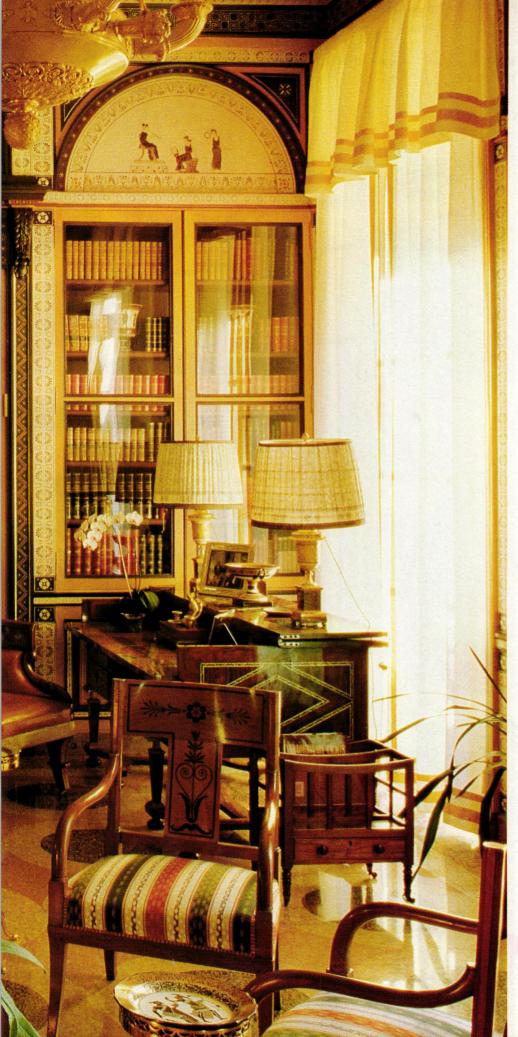


OF ALL THE MAGNIFICENT HOUSES MONgiardino has embellished, Baron and Baroness Guy de Rothschild's seventeenth-century Hôtel Lambert on the Île-Saint-Louis constituted the greatest challenge. To have redecorated Le Brun's state rooms would have been redundant, so the Rothschilds asked Mongiardino to transform less ornate quarters downstairs into a sumptuous setting for their collections. An Italian casket encrusted with enamels inspired the enfilade of cabinets d'amateur where the designer and his assistants, Emilio Carcano and Anchise Roncato, have covered walls with parquet de Versailles that shimmers with a faint stenciled pattern-a magical background for Hispano-Mauresque plates. The same team was responsible for the Mannerist frieze and the panels of verre-églomisé porphyry. Only objects of Rothschild quality can stand up to such a background without being eclipsed.









Mongiardino 1980s

THIS GREAT NEOCLASSICAL VILLA IN THE south of France was built little more than a half century ago by the distinguished American architect Ogden Codman—a dream palace designed for his own delight. To remodel it for the present owners, Mongiardino has renounced the romantic styles for which he is celebrated in favor of a highly conventional Neoclassical idiom. The result is consummate proof that the Italian maestro can beat the French at their own game. He has derived inspiration from Napoleon's team of decorators, Percier and Fontaine, creators of the Empire style. The quality and elegance of the wall decorations are especially striking. The red and white panels in the dining room-by the gifted painter whom Mongiardino likes to describe as Il Bergamasco (The Man from Bergamo) were inspired by the floral motifs and arabesques on Sèvres porcelain of the Napoleonic period. Roncato was responsible for the Etruscan panels in the library whose cool sheen derives from their being painted on glass. In the hall Mongiardino has rescued the original pale blue and grisaille frescoes from banality by giving them a terra-cotta glaze and embellishing them with terra-cotta reliefs. The hard-edged perfection of these rooms takes us back in spirit to the nineteenth-century watercolors of Neoclassical interiors that Mario Praz's An Illustrated History of Interior Decoration has made so fashionable.

FOR A NEW YORK COLLECTOR OF OLD masters, contemporary paintings, and rare books, Mongiardino has devised a sanctum that promises to be the most adventurous and modernistic room he has ever done. The walls are to be covered with a panoramic view of the Manhattan skyline—"like a ghostly Babylon," the designer says, "vanishing in the mist." Here we see the panels as they were set up in Mongiardino's atelier last fall. The versatile painter II Bergamasco has just finished working on them. By the time this article appears they should be installed on Park Avenue.

Silhouetted against the Hugh Ferrisslike skyscrapers is a frieze of musical instruments and other still-life objects in trompe l'oeil that allegorize Renaissance music, painting, and architecture. Mongiardino's concept has to do with seeing reality and make-believe, the past and the future in terms of each other, and reconciling the artistry and craftsmanship of the Old World with the technology of the New. Trust him to employ a somewhat arcane medium: he has treated the panels like a monumental collage and executed them in faux marquetry resembling the kind known as intarsia, the finest examples of which are in the ducal palace at Urbino.

As usual Mongiardino has sought inspiration in unexpected places: among them Chirico's Metaphysical vistas and the backgrounds of Flemish Madonnas. The church is Bramante's San Satiro in Milan, a building that epitomizes the Renaissance. Holbein portraits are the source for the architect's plumb line and ivory ball, the simulated Turkey carpet, as well as the lute and mandolin that symbolize the client's love of music. No question about it, Mongiardino has come up with a perfect allegory for the last decade of the millennium.





Brightening Bolts

In a festival of colors, Italy's fabrics are electrifying

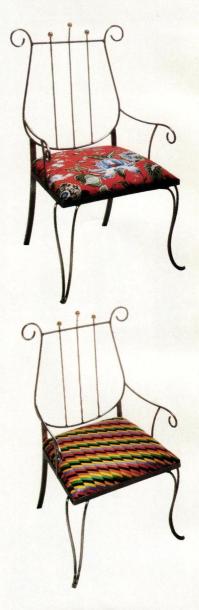
BY ERIC BERTHOLD

taly has been famous for its splendid cloth ever since the Medicis bank-- rolled Florence's burgeoning textile industry in the fifteenth century. Cottons and linens coming from these experienced looms range from stately ribbon-striped grids to painterly florals, all saturated with bright celebratory colors. Couturier Valentino plants a verdant jungle pattern among his line of home textiles. And from Christopher Hyland there's a marbleized print that pays homage to the Renaissance. Other European designers, too, are looking to Italy: Ian Wall dubbed one of his recent prints Palladio.

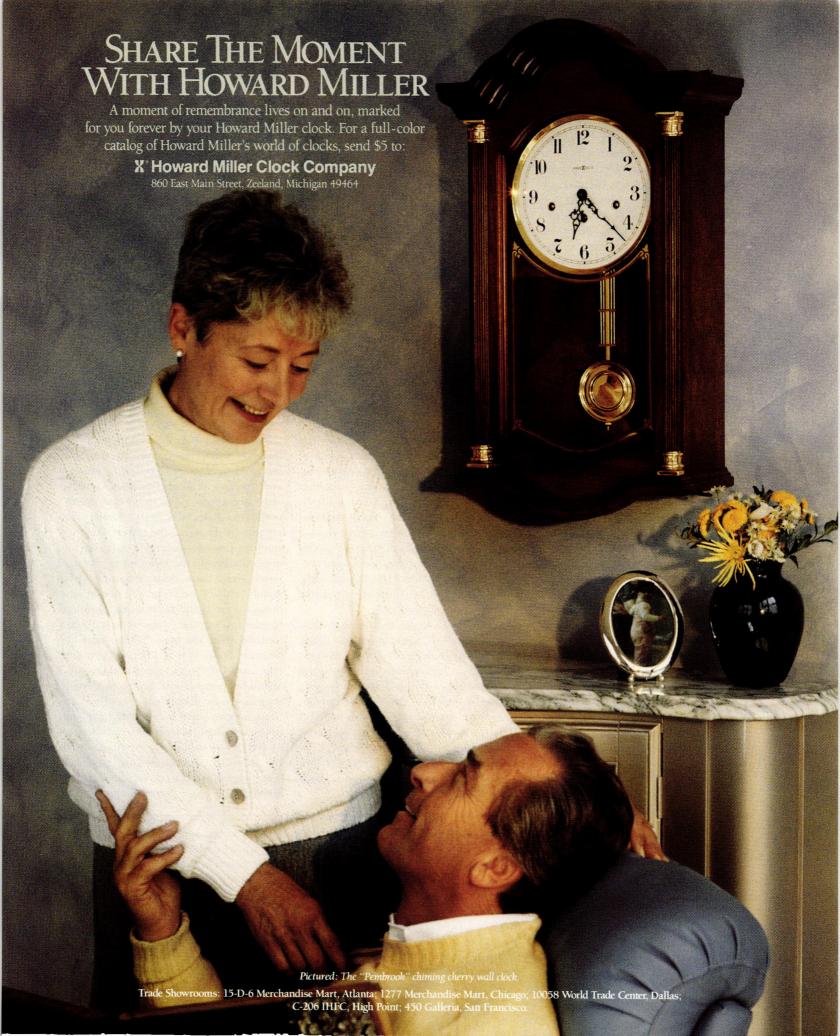








A medley of fabric designs provide colorful offbeat upholstery for a lyre-back chair from Pat Carpenter. Left to right, from top: Procuratie, Lady Barrett, and Clara Completo from Christopher Hyland; Palladio from Ian Wall; Shanghai by Missoni and Rennes by Valentino from Coraggio Textiles; Osiris from Ian Wall. Details see Resources.



Piranesi's Domain

(Continued from page 158) added a tower to the garden façade of the priory and commissioned a small Kaffeehaus—a pavilion for literary conversation over coffee, traditionally known in Rome by the German word for café—that stands between the parterres. A large-scale map of Rome published in 1748 by Giambattista Nolli provides a bird's-eye view of the site shortly before Piranesi arrived on the scene. Two rows of shrubs stand on the same axis as the laurel allée and two parterres exist, though the outlines of their beds lack the intricacy of those we see today.

Coming from Venice, where he had been trained as an architect, Giovanni Battista Piranesi settled in Rome just as the last of the late Baroque building projects were nearing completion. Money was in short supply, and the great Roman families could just afford to maintain their palaces. So while Piranesi signed himself Architetto Veneziano, he earned his living by printing views of Rome for tourists. As he later wrote, "When I saw how most of the remains of ancient buildings lay scattered in gardens and ploughed fields where they dwindled day by day, either weathering away, or being quarried...to steal fragments for new buildings, I resolved to preserve them by means of etchings."

By 1758, when the Venetian Carlo Rezzonico was named Pope Clement XIII, Piranesi enjoyed a European reputation as a polemical archaeologist and a topographical etcher. Best known for his emotionally charged *Views of Rome* (his early *Imaginary Prisons* would account for his posthumous fame), he had not yet built anything significant. His opportunity came when one of the pope's nephews, Cardinal Giambattista Rezzonico, became grand prior of the Knights of Malta in Rome and hired Piran-

esi to restore the order's church, Santa Maria del Priorato. Thanks to an account book compiled from the daily worksheets of the contractor (now in the Avery Architectural Library of Columbia University), we can follow the work from November 1764, when the crumbling foundations first received attention, to October 1766, when the pope inspected the completed work and expressed his family's satisfaction by making Piranesi a Knight of the Golden Spur. Soon after, the artist began to sign his work Cavaliere.

At the age of 49, just after Clement died, Piranesi published Divers Manners of Ornamenting Chimneypieces and all other Parts of Houses derived from the Egyptian, Tuscan, and Grecian Architecture. In the preface Piranesi dedicated his designs—over 70 plates—to the Venetian cardinal for whom he had "renewed rather than [merely] restored" the venerable quarters of the Knights of Malta.

Editor: Senga Mortimer

Vidal in Ravello

(Continued from page 204) cultivation. The great changeover came several years ago when Vidal invited a landscape architect to spend an entire year at La Rondinaia. Although her best efforts fell considerably short of success, they persuaded Howard Austen that if Vidal and he hoped to have the garden they wanted, he would have to commit much more of his time and energy to the project. "You really have to live here year after year," Austen says, "to know what's going to grow and what isn't. You can't just design a garden in your head and impose it on the property."

To prevent the estate from turning into a burden, Austen says, "I'm trying to develop a maintenance-free natural garden," even though, like every gardener, he knows this is a contradiction in terms. No garden cultivates itself, and one the size of his and Vidal's requires two full-time workers. But Austen has cut down on the labor by installing an irrigation system—"the first in the area"—and by concentrating on flowers, shrubs, and grasses that flourish in the stony soil of southern Italy. As he runs through the names of the flowers he has planted in the past three years—gaillardia, geraniums, dianthus, agapanthus, fuchsia, iris, tritoma—Vidal can't resist a wisecrack. "Most of them sound like eye diseases." But of course they look like something else altogether.

When asked what he does in the garden, Vidal says, "I walk. Sometimes I sit. I think. Or think I'm thinking." As for actual work, he admits to having weeded a bit in the misty reaches of the past. Now he mostly restricts himself to carrying firewood, "one of the great forms of exercise." But unlike former President Reagan, whom he can imitate with deadpan accuracy, he is no chopper of wood: "I'm more like Lincoln. I think he split one rail and decided that was enough for the campaign."

Still, Vidal agrees with Voltaire's advice that it is important to cultivate your garden, and he does his job best by reading and thinking amid his flowers. (As he has often remarked, "The mind that doesn't nourish itself devours itself.") That's not to say that he does take the time to stop and smell the roses, however. On warm days he often sits beside the swimming pool and pores over a book, doing research for his novels, articles, or reviews. Then at sundown, he waits for the evening's loveliest moment, when the swallows sweep down to drink from the pool. "They come like Second World War B-17s, swoop in and take a quick gulp, and go up and around." When he gestures with his hand, demonstrating the swallows' steep takeoffs, it is as though Gore Vidal is describing the path of his thoughts and his books, spiraling out of Italy, over the Mediterranean, across the Atlantic, connecting this coast with America, linking the two fertile sources in his life. Editor: Senga Mortimer

In a Classical Mold

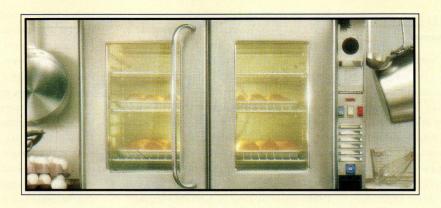
(Continued from page 178) points driven into the plaster to guide the final shaping in stone—the nails conflict with the sense of flesh that is present in everything Canova touched.

Modern taste is attracted to the action of art, the palpable traces of hands driven by

creative energy, and it is responsive to the rough, the fragmentary, the tentative, and the unfinished. Alienated by polish and perfection, such taste will feel itself in sympathetic surroundings in the Gipsoteca Canoviana, rather than among the chill marbles Canova's patrons so cherished. The great works, however, are only reflected here, as the forms are shadowed in the Cave of Plato's celebrated allegory—an

image Canova, steeped in Classical learning, would endorse. Moreover, the Postmodern revolution may yet enable many of us to fully appreciate Canova in all his polished glory. But the museum in Possagno and the Tempio on the heights above it are singularly poetic inscriptions of a personality once viewed as all but angelic in power and genius.

Editor: Beatrice Monti della Corte



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Jenn-Air

Different Thuns

(Continued from page 187) "neutral container with everything white and no pictures or color statements." "Susanne and I were dealing with images all day," he explains, "and I wanted this to be somewhere we could relax. It emerged totally from our way of living-everything was based on strategic decisions, like precisely the distance I was prepared to walk from the bedroom to the bathroom each morning. There was absolutely no attempt to apply a style or to use the house as a means of displaying wealth or promoting ourselves." He hopes that the apartment does not announce itself as a designer's residence and could be thought to belong to anyone in a creative field. But in the big white living room meticulous attention to detail might give the game away, even when the little photo-shoot displays of his own ceramics and glassware are removed. A meticulously designed lighting system, for example, is concealed behind the ceiling beams.

Susanne could not resist the glowing colors of the kilim that adorns the living room's pale floorboards in winter, but her love of color and texture is most extravagantly expressed in her own little workroom. Surrounded by walls covered in sumptuous French hand-painted paper, she sits at her antique Austrian desk on one of Matteo's Biedermeier chairs. She has covered them, daringly, in a luxurious fabric patterned

with monkeys and parrots.

When Susanne had the same fabric made into a winter eiderdown cover, Matteo refused to sleep under it for a week, demanding his own white counterpane on his side of the bed. But he soon came around, just as he has to the sizzling but soothing colors of the bedroom doors and entrance area. They were a substitute, Susanne explains, for a Caribbean holiday. The flamboyant hat that sits on a red sofa in the bedroom amplifies the tones of a 1920s nude by Ugo Celada da Virgilio.

Downstairs in the kitchen, granite tiles. and work tops complement the efficient system of functional white units that Susanne says "saved our marriage" when the upper floor was a building site and the family lived in this one room and slept in Constantin's bedroom along the corridor. The other downstairs rooms are a bedroom and bathroom for Felicità, the Thuns' Ethiopian maid. Like the rest of this household, she is elegant and talented in the domestic arts, particularly cooking. Now that the kitchen has reverted to its original function, Susanne has introduced a touch of extravagance. When she found a turquoise chandelier in a friend's antiques shop, she had to have it to go with the chairs that go with the turquoise telephone designed for Olivetti by their friend George Sowden. The logic is a little different from the strict functional approach expressed in Matteo's little workroom where he concentrates with

only a George Nelson desk for company.

The apartment is typically Milanese in just one way, says Thun. "There is no relationship between outside and inside—the façade gives no clue about what you will find when you enter the apartment." Indeed, the imposing but unexceptional turn-of-the-century building, the slightly shabby entrance courtyard, and the undersize lift do not prepare you for this airy domicile. And on a subsequent visit much may have changed. "Some Italian towns can become the inhabitants' second skin," Thun explains. "The piazza is like their living room. But Milan is a factory, an efficient factory, and it can never be like that. So the house becomes a second skin, one that you can change like the clothes you wear. For years I dressed only in black, then I began to feel like wearing other colors-classic blue and white. The house too can change as the seasons and your domestic feelings change. We are far from doing this house for eternity."

Even if the Thuns change their apartment out of all recognition, you'll still know where you are when you look out the window at a view dominated by the great cathedral. Between Leonardo's attempt to put a shadow on Brunelleschi's cupola in Florence with his flying machines and Matteo Thun's glides over Milan in his, aviation techniques may have moved on. But curiosity, the inspiration that connects the two artists, is more permanent.

Editor: Deborah Webster

Castle in the Air

(Continued from page 142) tasks of mending roofs, shoring up walls, and installing plumbing, and it continued—and still continues—with the hunt for choice objects to refurnish Castel Gardena's fifty-odd rooms. Obviously this had to be done with the utmost respect for its setting and history. In the early 1920s collecting folk art was by no means the widespread hobby it is nowadays, and the Franchettis soon became known throughout the Alto Adige for their eccentricity. Locals who wanted to get rid of what they considered old rubbish offered them things that many a museum curator would now envy.

A characteristic feature of Alpine interiors is the wood-paneled parlor or stube. Besides repairing extant paneled rooms in their castle, the Franchettis built in dozens from other sites in the Alto Adige. Tiled

stoves of fanciful shape, design, and coloring are another regional decorative tradition. Castel Gardena houses a collection of stoves that is perhaps the largest, and certainly the most varied, in the world. With the same knowledge, care, and taste the furniture was chosen by Carlo, his sons Mario and Giorgio, and Mario's son Andrea, the nominal owner. They bought, and keep buying, things that once upon a time could be purchased at a flea market for a handful of coins and now cost a fortune at specialized antiques dealers.

The effect of all this is far from the sterile atmosphere of a museum. Castel Gardena is very much lived in, for it is in itself the family's most cherished pastime. Its restoration and decoration are never finished. There are frescoes to be saved, stuccos to be patched, grandmother's trompe l'oeils to be repainted. Corridors are filled with furniture that needs repair. Andrea is a skilled carpenter, Giorgio

copes with practically everything, even the children take part in decorating their quarters, the stanze dei nani—the dwarfs' rooms. As other families would gather around a puzzle, the Franchettis put their heads together to recompose the tiles of a sixteenth-century stove.

You will not be formally invited to Castel Gardena, but you will be received there with the most generous hospitality if you happen to show up. There won't be much of a vie de château. The castle has no great hall, not even a big living room. You will probably be asked to help Giorgio in the kitchen, and you may accompany the lovely baronessa when she plucks dandelion leaves for the salad out of the weeds between the cobblestones in the courtyards. And you should not think it anachronistic when, in your seventeenth-century fourposter, you are gently rocked to sleep by Andrea's saxophone.

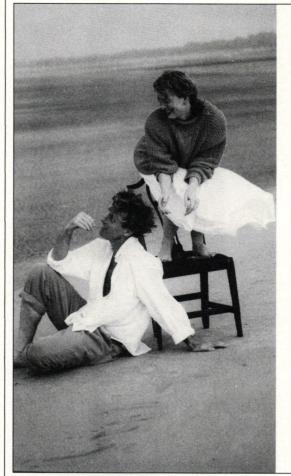
Editor: Beatrice Monti della Corte

marks: patterned surfaces, lavish color, forms borrowed from visits to the East, expensive and humble materials jauntily juxtaposed, the brute mixed with the refined. To Sottsass the beauty of Venice is partly that of age. His eye takes note of the decay not as a sign of neglect but, on the contrary, as evidence of heavy use. Venetians use their city hard, like a battered old mixing bowl that gives ingredients an indefinable sayor.

Recently Sottsass has focused on architectural projects, and on this visit it is the texture of urban space that beckons him. He speaks of an idea he calls Intimism, a way of emphasizing the architectural interplay between public and private space. He observes the rhythm of campo and calle, strangers shoved together in the narrow streets, dispersed again in open space, eye contact and body contact made and avoided. Vines spill over a wall, a bridge for the mind to a private world in the garden beyond. The carved wellhead in a square is no empty abstraction of a public monument but a visceral reminder that the community serves private life.

Gliding along the canal one night, an open space appears between the palace façades, as though a wall has flown up to reveal an interior complete with embracing couple, though the lamp over their heads casts an intimacy unlikely to be matched behind palace walls. In the day, propelled in jolts over land and water, we cross a city woven together by counterforces of gravity and buoyancy through which Venetians move as naturally as New Yorkers navigate the world of WALK and DON'T WALK. Two men approach, striding down the Riva degli Schiavoni in animated conversation. Not missing a beat, they help themselves into a small launch, start the motor, ease the boat out into the basin, their voices carrying back across the water as the boat tilts and turns: a bit of urban space broken off from the land, melting into light scattered over the waves.

A city that gives people ideas is not a dead city. Nor is there any longer much point in stigmatizing Venice as a tourist city. Not in an age when New York and other cities have sought to lure people back from the suburbs by remaking themselves into theme parks of retro-politan life. Not when the tourist and convention business is one of the few American industries that is not shrinking. And not when tourism has become a metaphor for the way we experience culture in the age of infor-



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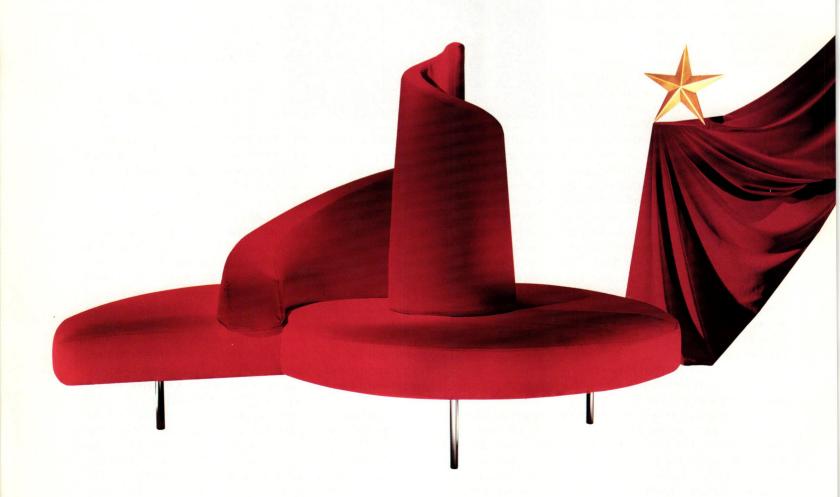
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mation: dropping in on different walks of life, ranging over history, science, art, politics, philosophy, furnishing our minds with fragments of specialized knowledge as though the brain were a chest of souvenirs.

Venice was built on this "contemporary" magpie sensibility. It is a place made of fragments, of buildings made from bricks and stones pulled from other buildings, other cities and cultures, from the city's own earlier incarnations, and shaped into a beauty of its own. The city continues this tradition in the mosaic of cultural events with which its ancient buildings are filled. Last summer in the Neoclassical Palazzo Grassi you could behold a brilliant array of Futurist paintings, then step aboard one of Marinetti's "rocking chairs for cretins" for a glide through golden afternoon light. In the fifteenth-century Gothic Palazzo Orfei, rooms lined with panels of Mariano Fortuny's sumptuous twentieth-century interpretations of Renaissance fabrics opened onto modern galleries hung with black and white Surrealist photographs. The nineteenth-century Ala Napoleonica, built for the emperor who had threatened to become "an Attila to the Venetian state," was stocked with masterpieces of French Impressionist painting. At the Casino visitors dressed for an evening's pleasure at the tables were funneled through a scholarly exhibition on the architecture, fashions, and social customs of seaside resorts.

The vitality of this year-round spectacle clues us in to the flaw in the Romantic association of Venice with death: it overlooked that the beauty of this city, its existence and its endurance, speaks of life lived with the utmost vigor. As Rilke noted, Venice is a victory of human will over the elements. Today that spirit is felt in the city's triumph over its own premature obituary. For nearly two centuries it has been common wisdom that Venice died with the fall of the Republic in 1797. In fact, the city embarked on another stage of life. "The Venetians never wanted an empire," Gore Vidal remarked. "They just wanted to do business." And business is doing fine. The goods today are not spices, salt, and jewels. They are images, juxtapositions, atmospheres, moods, and that most precious cargo of all, inspiration.





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Resources

PEOPLE

Page 100 Malibran viscose/cotton fabric on cushion, to the trade at Manuel Canovas, NYC, Los Angeles; Curran, Atlanta, High Point; Shecter-Martin, Boston; Donghia Showrooms, Chicago, Cleveland, Dania, San Francisco, Washington, D.C.; David Sutherland, Dallas, Houston; Shears & Window, Denver; Matches, Philadelphia; Designers Showroom, Seattle.

DESIGN

Page 102 Alessandro Mendini's 1985 Macaone table, black lacquer beech with black cowhide insets on top, for Zanotta, 115x260 cm, at Postmark, San Francisco; Adesso, Boston; Luminaire, Chicago; Areacon, Houston; Diva, Di-Zin, Massini, Los Angeles; Luminaire, Miami; Metropolis (to order), Minneapolis; Modern Age, NYC; OLC, Philadelphia; Mossa Center, St. Louis; Inside, San Diego; Di-Zin, Santa Monica; Current, Seattle. Paolo Deganello's 1982 Torso chair, steel structure, elastic webbing, polyurethane foam and polyester padding, for Cassina, to the trade at Atelier International, NYC, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C. Richard Sapper's 1972 Tizio lamp, halogen fixture, metal in matte black finish, for Artemide, \$420, for dealers call (718) 786-8200. Ettore Sottsass's 1969 Valentine typewriter for Olivetti, for dealers call (201) 526-8200. 104 Gaetano Pesce's 1987 Feltri chairs, thick wool felt and resined felt with polyester padding, for Cassina, to the trade at Atelier International NYC, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C. Aldo Rossi's 1987 Momento wristwatch and pocket watch bezel, stainless steel with black leather strap, for Alessi, \$1,250, at D. F. Sanders, Boston; Chiasso, Chicago; Nuvo, Vertu, Dallas; By Design, Los Angeles; Arango, Miami; D. F. Sanders, NYC; Fillamento (to order), San Francisco; D.F. Sanders, Washington, D.C. Nathalie du Pasquier's 1983 Royal sofa, plastic laminate, for Memphis Milano, \$7,756, Nathalie du Pasquier's 1983 Cerchio cotton on sofa, for Memphis Milano, 55" wide, \$114 yd, George J. Sowden's 1983 Quadro cotton on cushion and armrest, for Memphis Milano, 55" wide, \$102 yd, at Urban Architecture, Detroit, for dealers call (313) 873-2707. Antonio Citterio's 1986 sofa component of Sity sectional seating line, polyurethane foam, Dacron/feather cushions, for B & B Italia, for representatives call (718) 784-0211. Massimo Iosa-Ghini's 1987 Juliette chair, metal frame, straw seat, plastic back, for Memphis Milano, \$764, at Urban Architecture, Detroit, for dealers call (313) 873-2707.

THE HOUSE OF ARMANI

Pages 144–45 Giorgio Armani linen/viscose jacket, \$985, wool vest, \$500, silk/linen trousers, \$680, at Giorgio Armani, NYC, Chicago, Los Angeles, Manhasset, Palm Beach; Bergdorf Goodman, NYC; Holt Renfrew, Montreal; Holt Renfrew, Toronto. 150 Giorgio Armani silk dress, \$610, silk duster, \$1,270, at Giorgio Armani, NYC, Chicago, Los Angeles, Palm Beach; Bergdorf Goodman (dress only), NYC; Holt Renfrew, Toronto; I. Magnin, San Francisco.

PRIDE OF THE PRADAS

Page 170 Silk taffeta on pillows, 140 cm wide, L138,000 m, from Tessuti Rovati, Milan (2) 7600-0204. 175 Ashanti fabric, available only in long staple cotton, 45"—46" wide, \$204 yd, at Fortuny, NYC; to the trade at Bob Collins, Atlanta, Miami, Philadelphia; George & Frances Davison, Boston; Betterman's, Chicago; Ellouise Abbott Showroom, Houston; Keith H. McCoy & Assocs., Los Angeles, San Francisco; Stephen E. Earls Showroom, Portland, Seattle.

DIFFERENT THUNS

Page 182 Matteo Thun's Rinascimento Series vases

(three of seven shown), for Barovier & Toso, at Avventura, NYC; to the trade to order at Lightscape, NYC. 184 Paradiso Indiano cotton, by Etro, to the trade at Fonthill, NYC; Marion Kent, Atlanta, Washington, D.C.; Devon Services, Boston; Nicholas P. Karas, Chicago; Walter Lee Culp, Dallas, Houston; Donghia Showroom, Dania; Reynolds-Howard, High Point; Kneedler-Fauchère, Los Angeles; Shears & Window, San Francisco; Designers Showroom, Seattle; Primavera, Toronto. 184–85 Antonio Citterio's 1988 Le Canapé sofa for Flexform, to the trade at Frederic Williams Interiors, NYC (212) 686-6390. Tuscan early 19th century dormeuse, marble table, similar items at Grazia Montesi & Raimondo Garau, Milan (2) 655-7657. Matteo Thun's Collection Fantasia porcelain sugar bowl, for Arzberg, \$40, for information call (212) 685-1198. Matteo Thun's 1982 Rara

Avis Collection, Columbina Gratiosa ceramic coffee/teapot with splayed legs, \$1,800-\$2,500, Passa Passa, Passerina Noctua ceramic coffee/ teapots on bookshelf,\$1,800-\$2,500, for Anthologie Quartett, at Modern Age, NYC; Angle, Montreal; Limn (to order), San Francisco; to the trade at Acme Studios, Maui. Ettore Sottsass's 1982 Sol glass fruit bowl on bookshelf, for Memphis Milano, at Urban Architecture, Detroit, for dealers call (313) 873-2707. Matteo Thun's marble chimneypiece, for Up & Up, to the trade to order at Frederic Williams Interiors, NYC (212) 686-6390. Déjà Vu Collection furniture on terrace, by Mondo, wicker armchairs (#103), Pietra serena stone table (#401), lacquered wood and metal chairs at table (#303), at Oggi (to order), Baltimore; Adesso, Boston; Luminaire, Chicago; Diva, Los Angeles; Luminaire, Miami; Angle, Montreal;

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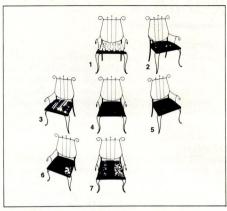
Resources

Modern Age, Umbrello/Portico, Zona, NYC; Inside, San Diego; Limn, Postmark, San Francisco; Current, Seattle; Inform Interiors (to order), Vancouver; for other dealers call Ivan Luini, NYC (212) 366-5346. 186 Italian early 20th century chandelier, similar items at Grazia Montesi & Raimondo Garau, Milan (2) 655-7657. Déjà Vu Collection lacquered wood chairs (#201), by Mondo, at Oggi (to order), Baltimore; Adesso, Boston; Luminaire, Chicago; Diva, Los Angeles; Luminaire, Miami; Angle, Montreal; Modern Age, Umbrello/ Portico, Zona, NYC; Inside, San Diego; Limn, Postmark, San Francisco; Current, Seattle; Inform Interiors (to order), Vancouver; for other dealers call Ivan Luini, NYC (212) 366-5346. Matteo Thun's King Collection stainless-steel teakettle, \$100, espresso makers \$150 6 cup, \$125 4 cup, tea maker/coffee server with warmer, \$190, for WMF of America, for dealers call (516) 293-3990. Keith Haring's Inflatable Baby on top of cabinet, \$12, at Pop Shop, NYC (212) 219-2784. 187 Paradiso Indiano cotton on quilt, by Etro, to the trade at Fonthill, NYC; Marion Kent, Atlanta, Washington, D.C.; Devon Services, Boston; Nicholas P. Karas, Chicago; Walter Lee Culp, Dallas, Houston; Donghia Showroom, Dania; Reynolds-Howard, High Point; Kneedler-Fauchère, Los Angeles; Shears & Window, San Francisco; Designers Showroom, Seattle; Primavera, Toronto. Ettore Sottsass's 1982 Murmansk silver fruit dish, for Memphis Milano, at Urban Architecture, Detroit, for dealers call (313) 873-2707

ESCAPE TO THE CAMPAGNA
Page 196 Antique clocks, 1500–1820, at Gilbert Zabert, Turin (11) 878627. 199 Hand-loomed Indian silk on sofa, similar items to order at Sonali-Rossellini Senroy, Rome (6) 687-6365.

SAMPLES

Page 218 Lyre-back chair in heavy steel, satin steel finish, \$650, to order from Pat Carpenter Design, High Point (919) 882-9326. FABRICS ON CHAIRS 1 Procuratie cotton, 53" wide, \$96 yd, to the trade at Christopher Hyland, NYC, Travis-Irvin, Atlanta; Shecter-Martin, Boston; Dick Penny Showroom, Cincinnati; John Edward Hughes, Dallas; Bill Nessen, Dania; George Wallach Antiques (retail), Los Angeles; Bob Collins, Philadelphia; Shears & Window, San Francisco. 2 Lady Barrett cotton, 55' wide, \$113 yd, to the trade at Christopher Hyland (see above). 3 Clara Completo cotton, 55" wide, \$93 yd, at Christopher Hyland (see above). 4 Palladio viscose, 51" wide, \$99 yd, from Bergamo's Sahco Hesslein Collection, to the trade at lan Wall, NYC; Travis-Irvin, Atlanta; Fortune, Boston; Holly Hunt, Chicago, Minneapolis; John Edward Hughes, Dallas, Houston; Bill Nessen, Dania; JEH Denver, Denver; Keith H. McCoy, Los Angeles;



Delk-Morrison, New Orleans; JW Showroom, Philadelphia; Regency House, San Francisco; Gerald Earls, Seattle; Marion Kent, Washington, D.C. 5 Shanghai cotton, by Missoni Interior Design Collection, to the trade at Coraggio Textiles, NYC, for showrooms call (800) 624-2420. 6 Rennes linen, by Valentino Più Collection, to the trade at Coraggio Textiles, for showrooms call (800) 624-2420. **7** Osiris cotton, 55" wide, \$104 yd, from Bergamo's Sahco Hesslein Collection, to the trade at Ian Wall, NYC; Travis-Irvin, Atlanta; Fortune, Boston; Holly Hunt, Chicago, Minneapolis; John Edward Hughes, Dallas, Houston; Bill Nessen, Dania; JEH Denver, Denver; Keith H. McCoy, Los Angeles; Delk-Morrison, New Orleans; JW Showroom, Philadelphia; Regency House, San Francisco; Gerald Earls, Seattle; Marion Kent, Washington, D.C.

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EDITORS NOTE: The February cover was photographed in the Bellport, New York, garden of artist Peter Schlesinger. The striped pink 'Commandant Beaurepaire' is a Bourbon rose introduced in 1874.

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ALBERTO ALESSI

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I asked Alberto Alessi if there was anyone in the United States who does what he does in Italy, and he said, without a second's hesitation, "No." Which is true and which is too bad because

what Alberto Alessi does in Italy is enlist the best design talents in the world to reinvent such domestic essentials as coffee makers and salt shakers, cheese graters and frying pans, pasta pots and flatware, which he then produces in a factory north of Milan and distributes in seventy countries around the globe. "American companies are not design oriented," explained the 43-year-old grandson of a lathe worker who began making what we now call tabletop products in 1921. "They are oriented to the market—or to what they believe to be the market." Which is not, it was tacitly understood, the Italian manufacturer's idea of traveling the high road.

"For me design is something very close to art and poetry," said Alessi, who sounded so much more earnest than pretentious that he made me forget, for the moment, that we were talking about teakettles. "Alessi is like a kind of laboratory for research into the applied arts. Our structure and organization are forged to follow the dreams of the best creative talents of our time."

Following those dreams requires both patience and persistence. Consider the case of Ettore Sottsass's metal and crystal cruet set, which, owing to technical difficulties, took seven years to find its way into production. And then there is the perennial high risk involved in high design. "You have to be

prepared to accept big fiascoes," Alessi warned, recalling a collaboration with curators at the Centre Pompidou in Paris who hoped to promote French design by wedding six native sons to the Italian manufacturer. A disaster, Alessi confessed, save for "research" done with Philippe Starck. The results of that experiment, unveiled this year, are a colander with a frieze of perforated rabbit heads around the rim, a lemon squeezer that suggests some futuristic bug, and a teakettle that looks like nothing you've ever seen before.

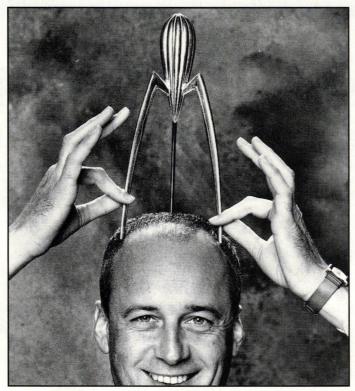
Although the commercial success Starck's winsome wares will undoubtedly enjoy is allegedly not Alessi's first priority, such success can nonetheless be helpful. Alessi's 73-year-old father, Carlo, the company president, for example, was not at all convinced in 1970, when Alberto signed on as manager in charge of product development, that he wanted to hitch the family wagon to the avant-garde. But with the popularity of such high-profile products as Michael Graves's cone-shaped stainless-steel teakettle with the little red plastic bird perched on its spout, which Alessi sells at the rate of about 100,000 a year, his father began to see the light. As did the American consumer: over the past decade the U.S. market has become the third largest—after Italy and Germany—for the company's not exactly competitively priced products. Alberto Alessi chalks up his newfound favor in the States to an expanding segment of the upper middle class which has the time, money, and visual sophistication to appreciate such small aesthetic gestures as Arata Isozaki-designed knobs on Alessandro Mendini-designed cookware. "We tend to look at your country as a test market," he added. "If a new object is well accepted by you, then we are sure it will be well accepted

Alessi's affection for the American public is matched by his affection for American design talent. In addition to his very fruitful relationship with Graves, who currently boasts eight products in the Alessi line, the Italian firm has invited Frank Gehry, Robert Venturi, Stanley Tigerman, and Milton Glaser to try their hands at everything from tea sets and pepper mills to cutting boards and bread baskets. Which seems noteworthy—I had always heard Italians were notoriously chauvinistic when it came to design. "On the contrary," said Alessi. "The pe-

all over the world."

riod of Italian *bel disegno* ended in the seventies. We are open to the most interesting personalities in the world."

In addition to an all-star cast that includes Matteo Thun, Aldo Rossi, Massimo Iosa-Ghini, Mario Botta, Richard Sapper, Achille Castiglioni, and a host of others, Alessi's roster of interesting personalities recently expanded to include 39 women designers, all under the age of thirty. They are Alberto Alessi's insurance for the future, his way of keeping his place in the vanguard. His American competitors would do well to take note—to wake up, in other words, and smell the cappuccino. **Charles Gandee**



Alberto Alessi with his new lemon squeezer by Philippe Starck